Tenorio vows to maintain confidence in Judiciary's impartiality, fairness. PAGE 2
Police presence increased at COVMS. PAGE 4

Hafa Adai!

Saipan Tribune

$1

THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 14

www.saipantribune.com | FRIDAY JANUARY 19, 2024 | www.facebook.com/saipantribune

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
Tourists go through Customs and Border Protection officers at the Francisco C. Ada/ Saipan International Airport.

DHS OKs EVS-TAP interim final ruling

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S Department of Homeland Security has issued an interim final ruling on the CNMI Economic Vitality & Security Travel Authorization Program, or EVS-TAP, and has ruled in favor of its creation. The interim final ruling is effective September 2024 to allow time for public comments.

After weeks of uncertainty about the CNMI's economic state following efforts by U.S. lawmakers for DHS to revoke the CNMI's discretionary parole program that allowed it to let Chinese tourists enter the CNMI en masse, DHS finally issued a ruling that paves the way to create the EVS-TAP, providing hope for the CNMI's tourism industry's stability.

The EVS-TAP would essentially allow visa-free travel for pre-screened travelers from

See DHS on Page 4

Kilili won't seek 9th term as delegate

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP) announced yesterday that he will not be seeking a ninth term as the CNMI's delegate in the U.S. House of Representatives this November election.

"My love for the Marianas remains strong. But the time has come to pass this responsibility to a new representative the people will elect this November," said Sablan, who is turning 69 years old today, Friday.

In his public announcement

See KILILI on Page 4

OFFICE OF DELEGATE GREGORIO KILILI C. SABLAN
Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP), right, met with Gov. Arnold Palacios and Commonwealth Ports Authority board chair Joe Ayuyu, left, at his congressional office in Washington, D.C. last week. Sablan yesterday announced that he will not be seeking a ninth term as the CNMI's delegate in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Atalig, 3 others served with subpoenas

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Atalig

A House of Representatives special committee issued Wednesday subpoenas that summon former Department of Finance secretary David DLG Atalig and three others to appear before the committee as it continues its probe into the previous administration's Building Optimism, Opportunity and Stability Together Program.

Atalig and contractors Salina Sapp, Robert Travilla, and Shayne Villanueva were served with the subpoenas by the House sergeant-at-arms and were commanded

See ATALIG on Page 4

No arrest yet in alleged MHS sex assault

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Department of Public Safety has yet to make an arrest in the alleged faculty misconduct at Marianas High School last week that DPS now terms a "sexual assault of a minor" incident.

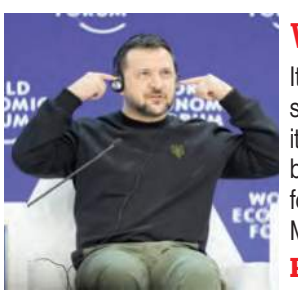
DPS finally spoke yesterday about the sexual assault of a minor claim that

See MHS on Page 4

INSIDE

BUSINESS
Marianas Deals has opened a second branch in Gualo Rai at the old location of the Commonwealth Cancer Association.
PAGE 13

ASIA
North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's declaration he would abandon the existential goal of reconciling with rival South Korea came as a shock.
PAGE 15



WORLD
It's been nearly two years since the United States and its allies froze hundreds of billions of dollars in Russian foreign holdings in retaliation for Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.
PAGE 16

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

GOT A NEWS TIP? TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440 FAX: 235-3740 EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com

Tenorio vows to maintain confidence in Judiciary's impartiality, fairness

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Deputy attorney general Lillian Ada Tenorio, seen in this screenshot from video, swears an oath at the start of a confirmation hearing for her nomination as a Superior Court associate judge. The Senate Executive Appointments and Government Investigations Committee held the hearing at the Tinian Public Library yesterday.

New Year.
New Financial Heights.
BOOST
SAVINGS
5.01% APY*
Limited time offer.
Start 2024 with a smart money move by
boosting your savings with a high-yield account.
At 5.01% APY, your money will work for you.
OPEN AN ACCOUNT** TODAY
bankofguam.com
Bank of Guam
Member FDIC
*Annual Percentage Yield. **This account must be funded within 5 banking days of opening or March 31, 2024, whichever comes first. The annual percentage yield (APY) listed is accurate as of 1/10/2024 and is subject to change at any time without notice. There is a minimum of $10,000 to open the account and obtain the APY. An early closure charge may be assessed, and forfeiture of all interest may be imposed if withdrawal occurs before maturity. Interest will be credited at maturity on January 31, 2025. Fees could reduce earnings on the account. A new or existing Bank of Guam deposit account is required for this promotional savings account. Restrictions apply. Offer valid for a limited time.

Local

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Deputy attorney general Lillian Ada Tenorio said yesterday that, if she is confirmed by the Senate as an associate judge of the Superior Court, she will ensure that her service will maintain confidence in the impartiality and fairness of the Judiciary to uphold the rule of law and to ensure equal access to justice.

"I will commit to work efficiently and effectively to support and defend the rule of law, the [CNMI] Constitution and laws of the Commonwealth, the Covenant, and the applicable provisions of the Constitution laws and treaties of the United States," Tenorio said during a confirmation hearing before the Senate Executive Appointments and Government Investigations held at the Tinian Public Library.

Tenorio received overwhelming support from many people on Tinian for her nomination as an associate judge.

She said she is humbled and honored by the confidence that Gov. Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang have placed in her.

Tenorio said she looks forward to the new challenges she will face as an associate judge if she is given the privilege by the Senate.

She said she understands that the role of a judge is to be an independent arbiter of cases brought before the court, making decisions impartially by evaluating facts and interpreting and applying law.

Tenorio described her legal experience as a "comprehensive journey," beginning as a legislative legal assistant at the CNMI Legislature back in the '90s delving into the introverted workings of the legislative process and developing a key understanding of crafting and interpreting laws.

Tenorio said this foundation and encouragement by the late former CNMI attorney general Maya Kara encouraged her to pursue a legal career.

After graduating from the University of New Mexico School of Law, Tenorio did her clerkship at the CNMI Superior Court and Supreme Court, where she worked under Justice John A. Manglona.

She said she honed her analytical framework and garnered a deep appreciation for the meticulous application of legal principles to relevant facts, then venturing into a world of counsel for the House of Representatives.

"I embrace the challenges of navigating the intersection of law and policy, gaining firsthand experience in legislative advocacy, then transitioning to private practice," she said.

Tenorio said she has engaged in a diverse range of legal fields, from administrative law to family law, collaborating often with litigators, like Robert Torres, and mastering the skills of effective representation of private clients. She said this private sector experience provided invaluable insights into the competitive legal landscape of the CNMI.

Tenorio said she then returned to public service in her current position as deputy attorney general for the CNMI first elected Attorney General Edward Manibusan, who is serving his third term.

Tenorio's principal duty as deputy AG has been to serve as the primary counsel for the departments and agencies of the Executive Branch and to oversee the staff attorneys assigned to each agency.

She said her work experience with the Legislative, Judicial, and Executive branches has not only equipped her with a comprehensive understanding of the law, but also instilled in her the versatility and resilience required to serve as a well-rounded legal professional.

Tenorio said she has called the Northern Mariana Islands her home all her life, as did her parents and generations before them.

Tenorio's late parents, Francisco Castro Ada and Ines Seman Ada, were school teachers during the Trust Territory era.

She said her parents taught her and her siblings the values of good citizenship, respect of others, and lesson that there is no substitute for hard work, both personally and professionally.

She said these lessons have nourished her as a daughter, sister, wife, mother and grandmother and have guided her through her more than 24 years of experience as a lawyer.

The EAGI Committee, chaired by Sen. Celina R. Babauta (D-Saipan), will also hold confirmation hearing for Tenorio on Rota and Saipan.

House OKs bill that creates Labor revolving fund

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The House of Representatives passed during a session last Friday a bill that seeks to establish a Department of Labor revolving fund and authorize the collection of fees that will aid its administrative hearing office serve other agencies.

House members adopted the House Ways and Means Committee's report that recommends the passage of House Bill 23-72 in its current form.

All 17 House members present subsequently voted to pass the bill. The bill, authored by Rep. Edwin K. Propst (Ind-Saipan), is now with the Senate for action.

House Bill 23-72 authorizes Labor to establish a revolving fund account and, through an amendment to regulations, provide administrative hearing services for a fee for agencies that are authorized to resolve administrative cases.

Those fees and other fees collected by Labor may be used to fund Labor's expenses for personnel and operations.

Before the voting, Rep. Marissa Renee Flores (Ind-Saipan) expressed hope that the Senate will act swiftly on the bill, given what's going on again with the Civil Service Commission and its need for a hearing officer, further highlighting the need for one.

The Ways and Means Committee had stated in its report that the regulations of more than 25 agencies, offices, and public entities in the CNMI mandate the attendance of a hearing officer or an alternative due process hearing. Despite this, majority of agencies lack a hearing officer to preside over due process hearings and the committee said the majority of these agencies lack the financial means to establish an Administrative Hearing Office.

The committee said that Labor's Administrative Hearing Office, which has been in operation for two decades, has the knowledge and expertise necessary to conduct administrative hearings for other agencies and it would be more economical and expedient for the Labor AHO to provide those services for other agencies rather than to replicating it.

By amending existing regulations, this bill would allow Labor to offer administrative hearing services to agencies authorized to resolve administrative cases in exchange for a fee, the committee said.

Under the bill, the Department of Finance will establish a revolving account that will be known as the Department of Labor Revolving Fund that may be used for the exclusive purpose of funding the personnel and operational needs of Labor.

Fees collected from an agency by Labor for providing hearing officer services, along with any other fees collected by Labor pursuant to Labor regulations, shall be deposited into the Revolving Fund.

BROTHERS AND BRILLIANCE

Villagomez brothers shine with their accomplishments

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

Two brothers' achievements are bringing pride to their home and showcasing Marianas skill and spirit after recently completing their scholastic journeys and gaining recognitions from their reputable universities.

For brothers Michael and Michail Villagomez, 2023 marked the end of one journey and the beginning of another as both men graduated with honors from the University of Arizona and the Northern Arizona University, respectively.

Michael Thomas Ada Villagomez graduated from NAU in May 2023 with a Bachelor's of Art in English with a Creative Writing emphasis and a Minor in Environmental Sustainability. His brother, Michail with an "i," graduated *summa cum laude* from the University of Arizona with a Bachelor of Arts in History and a minor in Government and Public Policy.

During his time at NAU from fall 2019 to spring 2023, Michael was on the Dean's List every semester of his college career and graduated with a cumulative GPA of a 3.66. He also served as a peer mentor for the Office of Indigenous Student Success.

Adrienne Kuntz, Michael's academic advisor at the NAU College of Arts & Letters, noted his travels to Ireland with the Creative Writing Abroad program, during which Michael not only studied other cultures and their stories, but also composed several of his own short stories and poems that were published in his school's magazine.

"His journey with NAU shows true Lumberjack spirit, looking for adventure and rediscovering the world from new heights." she said.

Michail, on the other hand, was also making his own track record at University of Arizona. And although the B.A. in History degree program normally takes students four years to complete, Michail completed it in just two and a half years, receiving the Dean's List with Academic Distinction Award and the Wildcat Distinction Tuition Scholarship in 2021 and 2022.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Brothers Michael, right, and Michail Villagomez made the CNMI proud with their academic accomplishments last year.

Michail's aim is to deepen his knowledge of 20th century U.S. and world political and military history, as well as American government and politics, and he not only finished his extensive courses on world history, but was able to complete an archival project at the CNMI Archives during the summer of 2022.

An active member of the Wildcat Fencing Club, serving first as secretary and then as vice president, plus keeping his straight A's and a 4.0 GPA, Michail kept himself busy until his graduation last December. He also gained attention after gaining the university's SBS Outstanding Undergraduate Research Award for fall 2023. Shining more light on the CNMI, his research not only explored the history of the CNMI islands, but it also gained the recognition and praise from the university's professors and historians.

In an article from the Arizona University, professor Steve Johnstone gave the following comments on Michail's research: "[We are] impressed not just with Michail's considerable academic achievements, but even more with the way he has directed his scholarship and historical skills in the service of his homeland. …Michail's ongoing commitment to apply his education in consistent and practical ways to the study and aid of his home community models what we want our students to do."

In that same article, Michail said, "I intend to dedicate my life and skills as a historian to the service of the Northern Marianas and the United States. …This aspiration will be underpinned by my admiration for my grandfather, to whom I am forever grateful."

Just like their grandfather, Jesus G. Villagomez, one of the men who drafted and signed the NMI Constitution, these young men are endeavoring to return to the Marianas to better serve their home. Their family shared that Michael arrived last summer, and Michail plans to join the Navy before returning to Saipan to work at an institution of public history.

Toys & Clothes
for children ages 0 to 10
20% off long sleeve jackets, tees, dresses & more
LOLLIPOPS
BEACH RD., GARAPAN
Monday - Saturday: 9am - 7pm
Sunday: 10am - 4pm
TEL. 234-8040
Like us on Facebook

a boutique for Tween Girls
ages 8-12
Dresses, Tees, skirts, jeans, shorts, and Accessories!
20% off long sleeve jackets, tees, dresses & more
Girl Talk
TownHouse in Chalan Kanoa
Mon-Sat: 11am to 7pm
sun: 10am to 4pm
TEL. 233-8050
Like us on Facebook

ARMATECH

Automatic Sliding Gate Operator Installer and Repairer
Tel: (670) 234-8895 | Email: armatech.saipan@gmail.com
Mobile: (670) 287-5525 / (670) 783-8895

LP GAS WUSHIN
Since1983 Committed to Safety Excellence
For your LPGas needs, please call 322-7415 or 322-8733
Open from 8:00am – 5:00pm Monday to Friday | 8:00am – 2:00pm Saturday

Police presence increased at COVMS

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

The Department of Public Safety has increased its presence at the Chacha Oceanview Middle School in response to an unauthorized entry that resulted in a verbal altercation last Wednesday.

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Department of Public Safety has increased its presence at the Chacha Oceanview Middle School in response to an unauthorized entry that resulted in a verbal altercation last Wednesday.

DPS divulged in a press statement yesterday few details about the unauthorized entry reported at the COVMS last Wednesday morning, besides saying it has increased its presence in the area.

In addition, DPS stated that the incident is under investigation and no arrest has been made yet.

According to an earlier DPS news release, it said the police department received a call at around 11:31am on Jan. 17, reporting a disturbance at COVMS in Kagman.

Upon arrival, campus staff informed responding officers that a male individual had attempted to confront a faculty member and had become angry upon being asked to leave by the school staff. The staff immediately requested police assistance.

However, when officers arrived, the male suspect had already fled the area.

NMI Democratic Party presidential primary on March 5-12

The Democratic Party of the Northern Mariana Islands will host its presidential primary on March 5-12 on the islands of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. The primaries will be the first step in the CNMI's participation in this nationwide process, and during this time, not only will Democrats elect their presidential nominee, they will also elect delegates to attend the August 2024 Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Details about the primaries on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota will be announced soon.

As of today, four candidates have qualified for the DPNMI presidential primary ballot.

1. President Joseph R. Biden Jr.
2. Jason M. Palmer
3. Rep. Dean Phillips (D-Minnesota)
4. Marianne Williamson

Party chair Jonathan Cabrera welcomes the four candidates, and encourages all Democrats to participate in the upcoming primary.

Party executive director Nola Hix said the Democratic race for the presidency began in 2020 with 20-plus candidates. "With several candidates conceding, we also began with four before narrowing it down to two candidates come caucus showtime. This will be the NMI's first-ever primary, and we are delighted to host all interested presidential candidates because we are Democrats, too, and our elections are just as significant," she said.

Details will be forthcoming, and all interested participants should visit www.nmidems.org to register as a Democrat today. Interested participants can learn more about this year's delegate selection plan by visiting the party's website, and all inquiries can be addressed to info@nmidems.org. ***(PR)***

DHS

From page 1

China to the CNMI, much like the current discretionary parole program in place.

According to the interim final ruling issued yesterday, DHS amends its regulations to require persons intending to travel to the CNMI under the Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver Program to submit Form I-736 electronically in advance of travel and receive an electronic travel authorization prior to boarding a flight to Guam or the CNMI.

Under the current visa waiver program regulations, a paper U.S. Customs and Border Protection Form I-736 is presented to Customs and Border Protection upon arrival.

This rule also establishes the EVS-TAP as a restricted sub-program of the G–CNMI VWP.

DHS notes that the program is being established based on recommendations pursuant to consultations between the United States and the CNMI under Section 902 of the Covenant to establish the CNMI in Political Union with the United States of America.

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

Tourist go through security at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport before they board their flights.

"Once implemented, the CNMI EVS-TAP will allow pre-screened nationals of the People's Republic of China to travel to the CNMI without a visa under specified conditions," DHS stated in its order.

U.S. lawmakers previously wrote Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas about the entry of nationals from the People's Republic of China into the CNMI through the discretionary parole program. That letter called for the program's abolition.

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce, the Hotel Association for the NMI, and CNMI lawmakers have pushed for the establishment of the EVS-TAP in response to the U.S. lawmakers' efforts.

The CNMI EVS-TAP was first proposed in 2019 and aims to enhance security measures while ensuring the orderly entry of PRC nationals for tourism purposes.

The proposed EVS-TAP program involves electronic screening, a maximum 14-day stay, and additional security measures for PRC nationals.

KILILI

From page 1

yesterday, he thanked the people of the CNMI for giving him what he called "the extraordinary opportunity and most humbling responsibility" of being their voice for over almost 16 years as their representative in the U.S. Congress.

Sablan became the CNMI's first elected delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2008. He is currently serving his eighth term.

He said this decision not to seek re-election comes after deep personal examination and consultation with his wife, Andrea, his loved ones, and supporters.

The delegate said it is not because he has accomplished everything he wanted for the people of the Commonwealth.

"The work is far from done," he said.

Sablan said he will leave Congress believing he has been able to establish the Northern Mariana Islands as a respected member of the American political family.

He recounted that when, as a young man he stood in the U.S. Capitol in 1986 and promised himself he would strive to be elected if the Marianas ever had a place in the institution, he never imagined he would be the CNMI's first representative or be able to serve so long.

"The people of the Marianas gave me this singular honor. I believe I have served you well. And I will be forever grateful," he said.

With Sablan's decision not to seek re-election, more candidates are expected to run for the delegate's position this November.

During his eight terms in Congress, either he ran unopposed or won through overwhelming votes.

ATALIG

From page 1

to appear and testify in the House chamber on Feb. 20, 2024 at 10am. Sapp, Travilla, and Villanueva were in charge of the BOOST program's marketing.

The subpoenas were signed by Rep. Ralph N. Yumul (Ind-Saipan), who chairs the Special Committee on Federal Assistance and Disaster-Related Funding, and vice chair Rep. Edwin K. Propst (Ind-Saipan).

The four witnesses are allowed to be accompanied by lawyers of their choosing and must remain during the proceeding until excused by the committee.

Failure to comply with the subpoena may subject the witnesses to contempt and a civil enforcement action.

Yumul told Saipan Tribune yesterday that the Feb. 20 date is a tentative schedule as there might be changes and that they will have to check with the lawyers of the four witnesses if they are available on that day.

As for former governor Ralph DLG Torres himself, Yumul said committee members will have to sit down and decide as to when they will call him to testify. Yumul said they will possibly call Torres as a final witness.

Using $17 million in federal money provided under the American Rescue Plan Act, BOOST was a project of the previous Office of the Governor, Department of Finance, and Department of Commerce. It aimed to provide financial assistance to CNMI businesses and nonprofit organizations, but some lawmakers alleged that it was used by Torres to gain votes in the 2022 gubernatorial election and enrich the previous administration's cronies.

MHS

From page 1

surfaced over a week ago, Jan. 9, involving an MHS student and MHS staff member and has confirmed that they are actively investigating the situation.

DPS, at the same time, noted that the individual in question was a faculty member, similar to what the MHS administration said last week.

Saipan Tribune learned from its sources, though, that the person involved—a teacher—had voluntarily resigned on the same day the DPS report was made, Jan. 9, citing familial obligations.

A statement from the office of Education Commissioner Dr. Lawrence Camacho last Monday stated that a former MHS teacher had resigned effective Friday, Jan. 12, 2024—three days after the incident allegedly happened.

DPS, in a press release yesterday, shared more details of the alleged incident.

DPS said it received a call at approximately 12:54pm on Jan. 9, about a sexual assault of a minor incident at the MHS campus. At approximately 1:01pm, officers arrived on the scene and met with the school's principal, Jonathan Aguon.

According to DPS, officers learned that a faculty member had been seen kissing a student on campus grounds.

"The incident is currently under investigation. No arrest has been made yet. The Division of Youth Services was also on the scene due to the victim being a minor child," DPS said.

On Monday, Camacho issued the following statement: "We understand this is a challenging time for all, however, rest assured PSS and MHS are committed to providing a safe, supportive, and high-quality educational experience for all students. We understand that transitions can be unsettling, and we want to assure the community that we are dedicated to maintaining the standards of excellence that MHS is known for. Our priority remains the well-being and education of our students, and we will work diligently to ensure a smooth transition for everyone involved. We appreciate the community's patience, cooperation, and support."

Customers First TRIPLE J
Payless SuperFresh & Truckload Store

SAVE MORE IN 2024!

PROMO DURATION: JANUARY 19-25, 2024

LIMITED EDITION ECO BAG 700 POINTS

LED STREET LIGHT ALLOY 495*210*MM
NOW! $64.95 WAS: $69.95

HOME BASICS – 6 DRAWER STORAGE TOWER ORG
NOW! $119.95 WAS: $131.95

OME BASICS – 5 DRAWER STORAGE TOWER ORG
NOW! $114.95 WAS: $129.95

HOME BASICS – WALL SHELF ARCH 18"
NOW! $19.95 WAS: $24.95

HOME BASICS – FLOATING SHELF 24" 2PC
NOW! $44.95 WAS: $49.95

NAT BLESSED MULTI CANVAS PNL 18"X42"
NOW! $34.95 WAS: $39.95

BESTWAY QUEEN AIR BED W/FOOT PUMP 11"
NOW! $36.95 WAS: $43.95

SAINTEVE 2 INFLATABLE LEISURE BOAT
NOW! $29.95 WAS: $39.95

HOLMES 16" STAND FAN W/ ROUND BASE
NOW! $34.95 WAS: $39.95

10FTX6.5FT RECTANGLE PATIO UMBRELLA OUTDOOR
NOW! $114.95 WAS: $125.95

FOLDING LOUNGE CHAIR
NOW! $23.95 WAS: $28.95

PRIMA – LUGGAGE 2PCS BLACK OR SILVER
NOW! $129.95 WAS: $139.95

FOLDING HARD ARM CHAIR
NOW! $36.95 WAS: $42.95

METAL FOLDING CHAIR BLACK
NOW! $26.95 WAS: $32.95

7X7 DOME TENT SELKIRK
NOW! $29.95 WAS: $33.95

CAB CHUCK ROAST
NOW! $7.49 /LB WAS: $8.59

USA PRIME PORKLOIN BONELESS STEAK
NOW! $3.99 /LB WAS: $4.99

GOLD YUKON POTATO
NOW! $0.99 /LB WAS: $2.39

MINI PEELED BABY CARROTS 1LB
NOW! $1.99 /PK WAS: $2.99

CHOICE LEMON
NOW! $1.99 /LB WAS: $2.79

RED DELICIOUS APPLE
NOW! $0.99 /LB WAS: $2.49

GRANNY SMITH APPLE
NOW! $0.99 /LB WAS: $2.79

ORANGE CELLO 4LB
NOW! $8.99 BAG WAS: $11.79

IMPERIAL TUB SPREAD 450Z
NOW! $6.49 WAS: $7.49

WESTERN BAGELS ONION 6CT 180Z
NOW! $3.29 WAS: $3.79

GET 2X BONUS POINTS ITEM

EARN DOUBLE POINTS

CHICKEN DRUMSTICK
NOW! $1.49 /LB WAS: $1.99

EL MEXICANO CASERO QUESO FRESCO 100Z
NOW! $5.99 WAS: $6.89

SMART BALANCE ORIGINAL 150Z
NOW! $5.59 WAS: $6.49

BENNY'S BAGEL DOGS POLISH SAUSAGE 4.50Z
NOW! $2.19 WAS: $2.69

BANQUET CHICKEN FRIED BEEF STEAK 100Z
NOW! $2.49 WAS: $2.99

TILLAMOOK SPICY MEXICAN BLEND FARM-STYLE SHREDS 80Z
NOW! $5.59 WAS: $6.39

BAR-S PREMIUM DELI OVEN ROASTED TURKEY BREAST 140Z
NOW! $6.99 WAS: $8.29

EGGO CHOCOLATE CHIP WAFFLES 10CT 12.30Z
NOW! $4.59 WAS: $5.29

SNACK PACK BANANA CREAM PIE 4PK 130Z
NOW! $1.99 WAS: $2.39

POPTARTS FROSTED CHOCOLATE FUDGE 13.50Z
NOW! $4.39 WAS: $5.49

Customers First! Rewards Plus

EXPLORE YOUR REWARDS!

EXCLUSIVE OFFERS FOR PAYLESS SUPERFRESH REWARDS MEMBERS!

KIKKERLAND STRING LIGHTS DISCO
WAS: $11.99
1,000 POINTS

2PK REM CONT ACCENT LIGHT BAR 6SETS DISPLAY
WAS: $11.95
1,000 POINTS

PILLOW 68*44CM 2PC SET
1,000 POINTS WAS: $11.95

SOFA BACK PILLOW
1,200 POINTS WAS: $14.95

SQUARE GLASS SCALE 11"
WAS: $14.95
1,200 POINTS

SIMPLY HOME PLASTIC WALL CLOCK 10"
WAS: $11.95
1,000 POINTS

HDX 48IN 4PC SUPER STRONG BUNGEE CORD
WAS: $14.95
1,200 POINTS

WE ACCEPT FOODSTAMPS! Tel: (670) 234-1444 @paylesssuperfreshtruckloadstore Open 7AM-9PM Daily

GUANGDONG HARDWARE
Never satisfied until you are
ON SALE
REGULAR US LUMBER, RED PLYFORM, "24X24" CERAMIC TILES, PVC S40 CONDUIT, PVC S80 WATER FITTINGS,
AVAILABLE NOW
SALE ITEMS!

Make a Difference for Your House!

NEW ARRIVALS!
CARPOLY PAINT
It's the suitable paint for the island climate.
Make your paint last for a long time!

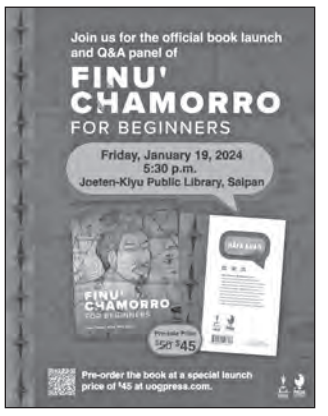
1 FREE T-shirt with one time purchase of two buckets of
CARPOLY
Professional Paint Solution Provider
First Come First Served, While Stocks Last
LED LIGHTS
• Less money, 50% energy saving!
• More stable, bright, and fashionable!
• More longer and environmental protection!
Your Smart Choice!
G60 Rebar is Available Now!
CHEAPEST DEALER OF MAJOR CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL ON ISLAND!
P.O. BOX 501640, SAIPAN, MP 96950
TEL: (670) 288-2288/2289/6688
FAX: 288-4488
E-mail:guangdong_hardware@163.com
BUSINESS HOURS:
Monday to Saturday
8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

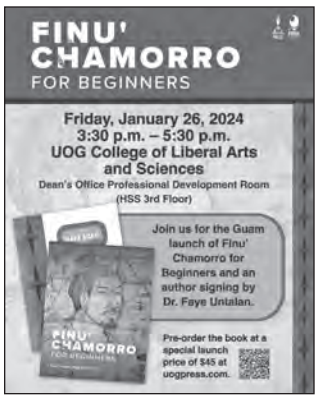
'Finu' Chamorro for Beginners' launched today

The University of Guam Press is launching *Finu' Chamorro for Beginners* by Dr. Faye Untalan under its Proa Publications imprint at Northern Marianas College on Saipan.

Finu' Chamorro is a thorough and hands-on instructional guide with language exercises for CHamoru language learners of all levels. It is the first post-secondary CHamoru language curriculum created with contributions from an expert panel of CHamoru scholars, instructors, and fluent native speakers.

"Not able to learn their language at home, Chamorro youths look to schools, places and opportunities to learn their native language. The Finu' Chamorro textbook is a resource for all Chamorros who desire to learn their language," said Untalan, who is


Join us for the official book launch and Q&A panel of
FINU' CHAMORRO
FOR BEGINNERS
Friday, January 19, 2024
5:30 p.m.
Joeten-Kiyu Public Library, Saipan
$50 $45
Pre-order the book at a special launch price of $45 at uogpress.com.


FINU' CHAMORRO
FOR BEGINNERS
Friday, January 26, 2024
3:30 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.
UOG College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
Dean's Office Professional Development Room
(HSS 3rd Floor)
Join us for the Guam launch of Finu' Chamorro for Beginners and an author signing by Dr. Faye Untalan.
Pre-order the book at a special launch price of $45 at uogpress.com.

a pioneer and leading expert on the CHamoru language and has widely published research on CHamoru culture and diaspora in the United States.

While Guam spells "CHamoru" with the first two letters capitalized and a "u" at the end of the word as mandated in Guam law, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands uses "Chamorro."

Untalan said the book's content and lessons not only cover language and orthographic rules of the NMI but also offer a glimpse into the diverse traditions of the CHamoru people.

"Young Chamorros living in a multicultural society seek cultural identifiers to establish their identity. Knowing their language affirms their identity," Untalan said. "We need to develop resources and opportunities for our youths who want to learn Chamorro, their native language."

The *Finu' Chamorro* book launch will be held at the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library on Saipan today, Jan. 19, 2024, at 5:30pm.

The event will include an author signing and a discussion of the text with a panel of leading experts on CHamoru language and culture that includes Untalan; Leo Pangelinan, Director Northern Marianas History Council; Barbra "Bobbie" Hunter, Professor at the School of Business at NMC; and Manny Borja, a long-standing CHamoru author, advocate, and educator.

The book will launch in Guam at the UOG College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences' Dean's Office, Professional Development Room, on Friday, Jan. 26 at 3:30pm.

Pre-orders of *Finu' Chamorro for Beginners* are available now for a special launch price of $45 at uogpress.com.

For NMI-based orders and inquiries, contact Kevin Bautista, the director of the Office of the President at NMC at kevin.bautista@marianas.edu or (670) 237-6703; for all other inquiries contact UOG Press Publicist Via De Fant at defantv@triton.uog.edu or (671) 735-2153.

About University of Guam Press

The University of Guam Press publishes an array of academic and literary books and journals with a specific focus on the unique history, environment, peoples, cultures, and languages of the islands that make up the Western Pacific region. Visit uogpress.com to learn more about them and browse their wide selection of local art and literature. ***(UOG)***

Scheduled water service interruptions today in 7 areas

The Commonwealth Utilities Corp. would like to inform the general public of a revised schedule for the water service interruption. The original scheduled water service interruption on Wednesday, Jan. 17, 2024, has been rescheduled to today, Jan. 19, 2024.

The water service interruption will be from 8am to 3pm and affected areas are San Vicente, Papago (along Isa Dr.), Lao Lao, Tuturam, Upper Dandan, Obyan, and Naftan.

The purpose of the water service interruption is to facilitate the work of USA Fanter, CUC's contractor for the Relocation of the Existing 0.065 MG Modular Water Tank Project. This involves cutting and capping existing waterlines and removing existing gate valves. The objective is to eliminate the transmission and distribution water lines connected to the temporary modular tank, which will be relocated to Kagman. The temporary tank will replace the existing 50,000-gallon steel bolted water tank in Kagman.

CUC
The map of Commonwealth Utilities Corp.'s water service interruption today, Jan. 19, 2024.

The Relocation of Existing 0.065 MG Modular Water Tank Project is funded by the United States PL Public Law 11-2 American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. The contract awarded to USA Fanter covers Phase 1 of the Kagman Water Tank Replacement Project, which includes relocating the existing 0.065 MG modular water tank, constructing the tank foundation, and installing piping and appurtenances.

CUC appreciates the public's cooperation and understanding as it works to ensure reliable service for our customers. For more information, contact CUC's hotline at (670) 236-4333, visit its website, and monitor its Facebook page for the latest updates. For emergencies, contact Customer Service at (670) 664-4282. ***(CUC)***

COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-24-005

OFFICE SPACE LEASE FOR CUC ROTA's ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTIONS & OPERATIONS

The Office of the Executive Director for the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), is soliciting competitive sealed bids for the lease of a suitable office and operations support facility for the Headquarters of CUC's Administration and Operations on the island of Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

The proposed office space must comply with American Disabilities Act (ADA), DPW, OSHA and CNMI Zoning regulation.

The IFB package may be obtained at the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration with CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The IFB package will be emailed to the registered Proponents email ID. For registration inquiries, please email Marcela Tenorio, CUC Senior Administrative Technician via email address, marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked *"CUC-IFB-24-005, Office Space Lease for CUC Rota's Administrative Functions and Operations."* to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, **no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on February 9, 2024,** at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Bids mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before due date and time or post-marked before submission deadline. Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

Bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

This Invitation for Bids does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of bids in anticipation of a contract. Bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from registered Proponents and must be submitted in writing no later than 10:00 AM (ChST) on January 18, 2024 to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Alvin King, CUC Rota Resident Manager at email address alvin.king@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio at marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT

NAME OF EMPLOYER: Marlyn P. Dougherty dba Mommyla Enterprises
THE POSITION: Beautician
NUMBER OF VACANCIES: 1
JOB DESCRIPTION: Provide beauty services such as: shampooing, cutting, coloring, and styling hair and massaging, and treating scalp; Apply makeup, dress wigs; Perform hair removal; and Provide nail and skin care services, such as manicures, pedicures, and various nail treatments
MINIMUM QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS:
EDUCATION: Must be at least a High School graduate
EXPERIENCE: Must have at least 24 months of relevant work experience as a Beautician
OTHER SPECIAL SKILLS OR REQUIREMENTS: Must know details of hair care and treatment, make-up, nail and skin care services, and other aspects of beauty enhancement
JOB SITE: Bougainvillea Street, Garapan, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
HOW TO APPLY: If interested, please submit or mail application and comprehensive resume, with supporting credentials to:

MARLYN P. DOUGHERTY
Owner/Proprietor
or
DEBRALYN D. SANTOS
MOMMYLA ENTERPRISES
Office Address: Bougainvillea Street, Garapan
Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Mailing Address: PMB 1, P.O. Box 10001, Saipan MP 96950
Email Address: mommyla01@hotmail.com
Telephone Number: (670) 788-0382

PREMIUM PRE-OWNED CARS

NISSAN · Ford · KIA · HONDA

HERMAN GUERRERO
Sales Consultant
Visit or call 234-5562

✓ QUALITY ✓ SELECTION ✓ LOW PRICES

NOW $15,888 ~~$17,995~~

2019 KIA SOUL PLUS
STOCK # K7016573, FWD, 2.0L 4CYL, AUTO
Est. Mileage: 55,971, Color: BLACK

NOW $16,888 ~~$17,995~~

2018 NISSAN ROUGE
STOCK # JW468654, FWD, 2.5L 4CYL, AUTO
Est. Mileage: 37,252, Color: WHITE

NOW $16,888 ~~$18,995~~

2018 KIA SOUL EXCLAIM
STOCK # J7625565, FWD, 1.6L 4CYL, AUTO
Est. Mileage: 27,166, Color: BLACK

NOW $16,888 ~~$18,995~~

2017 HONDA ACCORD LX
STOCK # HA247930, FWD, 2.4L 4CYL, AUTO
Est. Mileage: 72,155, Color: SILVER

NOW $18,505 ~~$24,995~~

2015 HONDA PILOT TOURING
STOCK # FB069925, FWD 3.5L 6CYL, AUTO
Est. Mileage: 57,587, Color: BROWN

NOW $18,888 ~~$20,505~~

2019 MAZDA CX-5 SPORT
STOCK # K0543793, FWD 2.5L 4CYL, AUTO
Est. Mileage: 20,200, Color: GRAY

NOW $18,888 ~~$23,995~~

2013 NISSAN X-TERRA PRO-4X
STOCK # DN813073, 4x4, 4.0L 6CYL, AUTO
Est. Mileage: 37,177, Color: GRAY

NOW $18,995 ~~$21,995~~

2019 HONDA CIVIC SPORT
STOCK # KE008615, FWD 2.0L 4CYL, AUTO
Est. Mileage: 55,375, Color: BLUE

NOW $19,888 ~~$21,995~~

2017 HONDA CIVIC SPORT H/B
STOCK # HU213590, FWD 1.5L 4CYL, AUTO
Est. Mileage: 58,019, Color: SONIC GRAY

NOW $19,888 ~~$21,995~~

2019 HONDA HRV SPORT
STOCK # KM704761, AWD, 1.8L 4CYL, AUTO
Est. Mileage: 29,808, Color: GRAY

NOW $19,888 ~~$23,505~~

2016 FORD EXPLORER LIMITED
STOCK # GGC52123, AWD 3.5L V6, AUTO
Est. Mileage: 66,677, Color: GRAY

NOW $21,495 ~~$22,995~~

2021 KIA SELTOS LX
STOCK # M7196591, AWD 2.0L 4CYL, AUTO
Est. Mileage: 13,980, Color: BLUE

NOW $21,505 ~~$24,505~~

2022 HYUNDAI KONA N-LINE
STOCK # NU848960, FWD 1.6T 4CYL, AUTO
Est. Mileage: 1,800, Color: GRAY

NOW $24,888 ~~$27,995~~

2016 TOYOTA 4RUNNER SR5
STOCK # G538658, 4X4, 4.0L 6CYL, AUTO
Est. Mileage: 65,177, Color: BLUE

NOW $36,505 ~~38,995~~

2020 FORD RANGER XLT SUPERCREW
STOCK # LLA34418, 4X4, 2.3L 4CYL , AUTO
Est. Mileage: 16,840, Color: GRAY

Joeten Motors POWERED BY YOU

SHOWROOM HOURS: MONDAY - FRIDAY 8AM - 5PM • SATURDAY 8AM - 12PM

Like us on Facebook

*Some conditions apply, O.A.C., See dealer for details. Vehicle may not be exactly as shown.

Many more used cars in stock to fit your budget & style

UOG Guam Green Growth invites applicants for Conservation Corps' 4th Season

Applications are open for the fourth cohort of the Guam Green Growth initiative's Conservation Corps program.

This five-month workforce development program is designed to prepare individuals for careers in the growing green economy while providing valuable hands-on experience in environmental conservation and sustainability initiatives.

"We are excited to begin the fourth season of the G3 Conservation Corps," said Dr. Austin J. Shelton, director of the UOG Center for Island Sustainability and Sea Grant. "This program is preparing our people to enter the growing field of green jobs and help create a sustainable future for our island at the same time."

UOG

The Guam Green Growth initiative's Conservation Corps program promotes sustainability topics, including agriculture and aquaculture, island beautification, reforestation, circular economy, recycling, and renewable energy. Applications for the fourth cohort are open through Jan. 19.

The G3CC program immerses participants in a comprehensive training curriculum that encompasses a wide range of sustainability topics, including agriculture and aquaculture, island beautification, invasive species removal, reforestation, circular economy, recycling, and renewable energy.

Through a blend of classroom instruction, hands-on field experiences, and mentorship opportunities, the program empowers participants to:

■ Develop the skills and knowledge needed to secure employment in the green economy.

■ Contribute to Guam's sustainability goals through active engagement in environmental conservation projects.

■ Gain a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness between human activities and the environment.

■ Promote environmental stewardship and sustainability within their communities.

G3CC participants also have the chance to earn up to 80 continuing education units from the UOG Global Learning and Engagement program and will receive a stipend. They will also gain exposure to diverse environmental organizations and initiatives in Guam and the rest of the Micronesia region.

The G3 initiative spearheads the G3CC program in collaboration with the Office of the Governor of Guam and the G3 Working Group, which comprises representatives from all sectors of society. Guided by the UN Sustainable Development Goals and the G3 Action Framework, G3 formulates tangible solutions to sustainability challenges and fosters a green economy for the island region.

Apply online at http://guamgreengrowth.org. Applications close on Jan. 19, 2024. ***(UOG)***

Coast Guard Guam restores VHF-FM radio communications

SANTA RITA, Guam—The U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam crews successfully resolved the Rescue 21 issue, restoring VHF-FM radio communications in the Mariana Islands on the evening of Jan. 16, 2024.

"We express our sincere gratitude for the public's patience and support from our partners during this brief communication disruption; ensuring the safety of all individuals remains our top priority," said Lt. Kira Adams, the command center chief at U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam's Joint Rescue Sub-Center. "In the face of ever-evolving challenges, our information systems and electronics technicians demonstrated significant fortitude and diligence."

USCG

Petty Officer 3rd Class Triana Perez, an information systems technician, conducts a successful radio check over VHF-FM communications from the bridge of the USCGC *Myrtle Hazard* (WPC 1139) following an outage in Guam on Jan. 17, 2024.

The National Weather Service issued a gale watch for the coastal waters of Guam, Rota, Tinian, and Saipan. The public can expect northeast winds of 25 to 35 knots with gusts of up to 40. In addition, a Hazardous Seas Warning is in place, with seas expected to reach 14 to 17 feet.

The U.S. Coast Guard strongly encourages mariners and waterway users to:

■ Have alternative communication methods available, including cellular and satellite phones, 406 MHz emergency beacons, and H.F. radios.

■ Stay vigilant and informed about weather and maritime conditions. Up-to-date information is available from the National Weather Service at https://www.weather.gov/gum/

■ Ensure readiness with emergency procedures and safety equipment.

Watchstanders can be reached on VHF-FM Channel 16 or by phone at (671) 355-4824 for maritime emergencies.

The U.S. Coast Guard Forces Micronesia/Sector Guam team focuses on maritime safety, security, and stewardship in Oceania. With a primary presence in Guam and Saipan and over 300 members across Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the team maintains a strong U.S. presence in the Micronesia sub-region and adjacent areas, closely tied to local communities. ***(USCG)***

Faith, Hope and
KARIDAT
Catholic Charities - Diocese of Chalan Kanoa

Request for Proposal for Financial Audit

Karidat Social Services is soliciting competitive sealed proposals to perform a financial and compliance audit in accordance with the Generally Accepted Auditing Standards (GAAS), the Single Audit Act Amendments of 1996 and in accordance with the provisions of Uniform Guidance for the fiscal years 2023, 2024 and 2025.

I. Contents of Proposal: The following information must be included in the Audit Proposal:
- A. Title Page Containing
  1. RFP Subject
  2. Name of the Firm
  3. Local Address
  4. Telephone Number(s)
  5. Email address
  6. Name of contact person
  7. Submission date

II. Transmittal Letter:
- A. A brief statement of your understanding of the work to be performed and an affirmative statement to perform work within the time period stipulated.
- B. State all-inclusive fees for which the audit will be performed.

III. Firm Profile:
Provide a brief description of you firm's personnel education background and experience, number of staff, staff level (partner, manager, supervisor, etc.) and listing of clients serviced. The firm must make an affirmative statement that at least the partners are Certified Public Accounts (CPA's).

IV. Proposal Evaluation Criteria: The proposal will be evaluated on the basis of the following criteria.
- A. Responsiveness of the proposal in clearly stating understanding of the work to be performed.
  1. Audit coverage
  2. Overall estimates as well as the time estimates for each major section of the work to be performed.
- B. Qualifications and experience of the firm
  1. Size and structure of the firm
  2. Ability to maintain continuity of project
  3. Experience of the firm in auditing Federal Financial Assistance programs and Non-Profit Organizations.
- C. Qualification and experience of staff to be assigned: education, position in the firm, number of years, and types of experience will be considered
  1. Qualifications of the audit team
  2. Supervision to be exercised over the firm's audit team
- D. Audit Fee

V. Audit Administration Matters:
- A. Karidat staff will prepare schedule as required by the Auditor.
- B. Audit Planning meetings, interim conferences and exit conference may be attended by the following officials
  1. Karidat's Board of Directors, the Executive Director, Accountants, and the Administrative Officer.
- C. Karidat will issue the Contract Award on February 9, 2024.
- D. The audit field work must be completed by May 15, 2024.
- E. The draft audit report must be completed by June 15, 2024.
- F. The Final Audit Report for each year will be transmitted on June 30th of the corresponding year.

VI. Confidentiality of Audit Proposals: All audit proposals will be reviewed in a confidential manner. Proposals must be labeled "CONFIDENTIAL" and transmitted to the Executive Director, Karidat Social Services, P.O. Box 501058, Saipan, MP 96950. It may also be hand delivered to Karidat's Office located at the, 5483 Dandan Road, Dandan Village, Saipan. Deadline for submission is no later than January 23, 2024 at 4:30 p.m.

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM,
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
Tel: (670) 664-2371 | Fax: (670) 664-2408 | Caller Box 10007, Saipan, MP 96950

ADDENDUM NO. 1
ITB24-GOV-42400016

" SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION OF TYPHOON SHUTTERS AT THE ROTA HEALTH CENTER"

The following changes to this Invitation to Bid have been approved by the Acting Director of Procurement Services:

Sealed bids must be marked **ITB24-GOV-42400016 - Supply and Installation of Typhoon Shutters at the Rota Health Center.** For bidders within the CNMI, **one (1) original, one (1) hard copy, and one (1) flash drive** containing a digital copy of sealed bids must be submitted to the Acting Director of Procurement Services located at Bldg. No. 12552, Anatahan Drive, Capitol Hill, Saipan no late r than **09:00 A.M. ChST, February 6, 2024.**

Bidders located outside the CNMI **MUST** fill out the Notice of Intent to Bid Form on (page 3) in order to receive this additional seven (7) working days for receipt of their actual bid documents. This Notice of Intent form may be submitted to the Director of Procurement Services through facsimile to (670) 664-1515 or e-mailed to bidintent@dof.gov.mp but must be received no later than **09:00 A.M. ChST, February 6, 2024. *Note that failure to submit this Notice of Intent Bid Form will be subject to the rejection of a bid.***

For bidders located outside the CNMI, **one (1) original, one (1) bard copy, and one (1) flash drive** containing a digital copy of sealed bids must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service or the official government postal service of a foreign country no later than **09:00 A.M., ChST, February 6, 2024,** and mailed to the Acting Director of Procurement Services at P.O. Box I 0008 C.K., Saipan, MP, 96950, and must be received no later than **February 15, 2024**. Failure to submit the required number of copies may be cause for rejection of a bid.

Please note: All other requirements stated in the Invitation to Bid shall remain as stated.

The provisions of the CNMI Procurement Regulations, NMIAC Section 70-30.3-725 and 70.30.3-730 prohibiting Gratuities, Kickbacks, and Contingent Fees shall apply.

The CNMI Government reserves the right to reject any or all bids or portions thereof and waive any immaterial defects if doing so would be in the best interest of the CNMI Government.

/S/ BRIEN SERS NICHOLAS JR

US Coast Guard cutter *Harriet Lane* holds change of home port ceremony

USCG

Admiral Steven Poulin, U.S. Coast Guard Vice Commandant, renders a hand salute before the *Harriet Lane* (WMEC 903) change of home port ceremony at Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam, Jan. 16, 2024.

HONOLULU, Hawaii—U.S. Coast Guard cutter *Harriet Lane* (WMEC 903) and crew held a ceremony celebrating their recent home port shift to Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Tuesday, presided by Adm. Steven Poulin, vice commandant, U.S. Coast Guard.

The *Harriet Lane* is U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area's newest Indo-Pacific support cutter. Harriet Lane and crew departed Coast Guard Base Portsmouth, Virginia, November 2023, and arrived at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, December 2023, after transiting more than 8,000 nautical miles for over 36-days.

The home port shift of *Harriet Lane* marks a significant milestone in strengthening the U.S. Coast Guard's capabilities and relations with nations in the Pacific Ocean. As part of this historic home port shift, *Harriet Lane* will work alongside allies and partner nations within the Oceania region with a focus on advising, training, joint deployments, and capacity building to promote and model good maritime governance.

"The U.S. has long supported peace, security and stability in the Pacific Islands," said Cmdr. Nicole Tesoniero, commanding officer, *Harriet Lane*. "Joining like-minded partners including Australia, New Zealand, and France, Harriet Lane stands ready to deliver sustained regional presence while signaling the Coast Guard's commitment to be a steadfast partner in one of the worlds most dynamic economically significant regions."

"The presence of the *Harriet Lane* in the Pacific is significant," said Vice Adm. Andrew Tiongson, commander, Pacific Area. "The demand for maritime governance has never been higher especially today in this dynamic region. Harriet Lane is a shining symbol of maritime governance, and it will make a positive impact in this world to align their operations with overarching strategies."

"The Pacific stands out as a strategic and vital region for the United States," said Poulin. "All Pacific nations must maintain sovereignty and must be able to enjoy their sovereign rights. The U.S. Coast Guard has unique capabilities and authorities that often make us the partner of choice, and we can meet the needs of other nations because we are flexible. We listen to what our partners and allies need and maintain strong relationships. This cutter reflects our enduring commitment to our partners."

Harriet Lane, commissioned in 1984, is a 270-foot medium endurance cutter now homeported in Honolulu to support Coast Guard missions in the Pacific region. The service's medium endurance cutter fleet supports a variety of Coast Guard missions including search and rescue, law enforcement, maritime defense, and protection of the marine environment. ***(USCG)***

USCG

Cmdr. Nicole Tesoniero gives a speech during the *Harriet Lane*'s (WMEC 903) change of home port ceremony at Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam, Jan. 16, 2024.

USCG

The *Harriet Lane* is U.S. Coast Guard Pacific Area's newest Indo-Pacific support cutter. Harriet Lane and crew departed Coast Guard Base Portsmouth, Virginia, November 2023, and arrived at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, December 2023, after transiting more than 8,000 nautical miles for over 36 days.

USCG

U.S. Coast Guard Cutter *Harriet Lane* (WMEC 903) and crew held a ceremony celebrating their recent home port shift to Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Tuesday, presided over by Adm. Steven Poulin, vice commandant, U.S. Coast Guard.

DIVISION OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB24-DPW/ED-42400027

SUBMISSION DATE: FEBRUARY 5, 2024 TIME: 09:00 A.M.

"OFFICE SPACE LEASE FOR DPW, ENERGY DIVISION"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED ON THE MUNIS VENDOR SELF SERVICE PORTAL (https://selfservice.dof.gov.mp/vss/) OR AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT SERVICES, LOCATED AT BLDG NO. 12552, ANATAHAN DRIVE, CAPTIOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS ITB CAN BE MADE TO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS - ENERGY DIVISION BY JANUARY 26, 2024, TO, MR. VINCENT ATTAO VIA EMAIL AT v.attao@cnmienergy.gov.mp

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ THELMA B. INOS
DIRECTOR,
DPW-ENERGY DIVISION

/S/ BRIEN SERS NICHOLAS JR.
ACTING DIRECTOR, PS

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY
MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
PO BOX 501055•SAIPAN•MP•96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500/1 • FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
WEBSITE: WWW.CNMIPORTS.COM

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION STATEMENTS FOR ARCHITECTURAL/ENGINEERING DESIGN AND PLANNING SERVICES

CHARLIE DOCK EXTENSION PROJECT
PORT OF SAIPAN
PROJECT NO. CPA-SS-001-24

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) is a public corporation and autonomous agency of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). In accordance with its Procurement Rules and Regulations, CPA is soliciting statements of professional qualifications from interested Consultants for Architectural and Engineering (A/E) Design and Planning Services for the Charlie Dock Extension Project at the Port of Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, Project No. CPA-SS-001-24.

The project is being funded by the U.S. Maritime Administration and is in accordance and compliance with CPA's Procurement Rules and Regulations, Section 40-50-202, Architect-Engineer Design and Construction Management Services.

The Request for Qualification (RFQ) Package is available at CPA's Administration Office, 2nd floor of the arrival terminal at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. No fee is required for obtaining the RFQ package. Electronic copies may be made available upon written request to Ms. Wendi Prater at wprater@cnmiports.com or Ms. Sheri Llagas at receptionist@cnmiports.com.

Questions regarding this request for qualification statements must be submitted to Ms. Prater, CPA's Executive Assistant/Project Manager, via email to wprater@cnmiports.com or hand delivered to the CPA Administration Office by no later than 5:00 p.m. CHST, Friday, January 12, 2024.

The statements of professional qualification will be evaluated based on the criteria available in the RFQ package.

Interested Consultants are requested to submit one (1) original, four (4) copies and one (1) electronic version in .pdf of their statements of professional qualifications no later than **5:00 p.m. CHST, FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2024.** Statements of qualification must be presented by a combination of both brochures and the use of current U.S. Government Standard Form 330.

The CPA reserves the right to reject any or all statements of professional qualification for any reason, if in its sole opinion to do so would be in its best interest.

/s/ LEO B. TUDELA
Executive Director

Date: December 20, 2023

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
3rd Floor, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building
P.O. Box 501220 CK • Saipan, MP 96950-1220
Tel: (670) 664-4282 • Facsimile: (670) 235-5131

PUBLIC NOTICE/AGENDA

Pursuant to the Open Government Act (1 CMC §9901 et seq), the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation ("CUC") Board of Directors hereby informs the general public that the Board will hold its regular meeting on **Thursday, January 25, 2024, at 10:00 a.m.** The meeting will be held at the CUC Conference Room, Room 17, 3rd Floor, Joeten Dandan Building. The following agenda will be considered and public attendance is welcome.

I. Preliminary Matters
- A. Call to Order
- B. Roll Call
- C. Adoption of Agenda*
- D. Adoption of Minutes
  1. December 7, 2023 Regular Board Meeting
- E. Correspondence

II. Management Report
- A. Executive Director's Report
- B. Chief Financial Officer's Report
- C. Legal Counsel's Report

III. Committee Reports
- A. Personnel Committee

IV. Old Business
- A. Proposed Amendments to CUC's Procurement Rules and Regulations
- B. Amendment to CUC Board Bylaws
- C. Update on the Recruitment of the Executive Director Position

V. New Business
- A. Appeal to the Board of Directors Re: Administrative Case No. 17-CUC-0001BD
- B. CHCC Receivables
- C. Fats, Oils, Grease (FOG) Program

VI. Public Comments**
VII. Executive Session*
VIII. Announcements
IX. Adjournment

_____/s/_____
JANICE A. TENORIO, CHAIRWOMAN

* In accordance with Public Law 8-41, additional agenda items may be added to the above listing only by a recorded vote of the majority members of the governing body.
** Pursuant to 1 CMC §9912, the CUC Board of Directors may vote to meet at any time in executive session, to consult with the Legal Counsel on matters deemed privileged and confidential.

COMMONWEALTH PORTS AUTHORITY
MAIN OFFICE: SAIPAN INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, 2ND FLOOR ARRIVAL BLDG.
PO BOX 501055•SAIPAN•MP•96950
PHONE: (1-670) 237-6500/1 • FAX: (1-670) 234-5962
WEBSITE: WWW.CNMIPORTS.COM

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATION STATEMENTS FOR ARCHITECTURAL/ENGINEERING DESIGN AND PLANNING SERVICES

SAIPAN HARBOR DREDGING PROJECT
PORT OF SAIPAN
PROJECT NO. CPA-SS-002-24

The Commonwealth Ports Authority (CPA) is a public corporation and autonomous agency of the Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). In accordance with its Procurement Rules and Regulations, CPA is soliciting statements of professional qualifications from interested Consultants for Architectural and Engineering (A/E) Design and Planning Services for the Saipan Harbor Dredging Project at the Port of Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands, Project No. CPA-SS-002-24.

The project is being funded by the U.S. Maritime Administration and is in accordance and compliance with CPA's Procurement Rules and Regulations, Section 40-50-202, Architect-Engineer Design and Construction Management Services.

The Request for Qualification (RFQ) Package is available at CPA's Administration Office, 2nd floor of the arrival terminal at the Francisco C. Ada/Saipan International Airport. No fee is required for obtaining the RFQ package. Electronic copies may be made available upon written request to Ms. Wendi Prater at wprater@cnmiports.com or Ms. Sheri Llagas at receptionist@cnmiports.com.

Questions regarding this request for qualification statements must be submitted to Ms. Prater, CPA's Executive Assistant/Project Manager, via email to wprater@cnmiports.com or hand delivered to the CPA Administration Office, by no later than 5:00 p.m. CHST, Friday, February 2, 2024.

The statements of professional qualification will be evaluated based on the criteria available in the RFQ package.

Interested Consultants are requested to submit one (1) original, four (4) copies and one (1) electronic version in .pdf of their professional qualification statements, no later than **5:00 p.m. CHST, FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 16, 2024.** Statements of qualification must be presented by a combination of both brochures and the use of current U.S. Government Standard Form 330.

The CPA reserves the right to reject any or all statements of professional qualification for any reason, if in its sole opinion to do so would be in its best interest.

/s/ LEO B. TUDELA
Executive Director

Date: January 9, 2024

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 14

Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

Mark Rabago EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Like Canada, US should control drug prices

Of course it should never have taken more than three years and the threat of a lawsuit for the FDA to approve Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' plan to import prescription drugs in bulk from Canada.

The delay likely owed to the pharmaceutical industry's implacable opposition to anything that would curb its profits, rather than to any foot-dragging by President Joe Biden, whose executive order two-and-a-half years ago instructed the agency to cooperate with Florida and like-minded states.

It is true, to be sure, that every government bureaucracy is beset to varying degrees by well-paid, well-staffed lobbies for whom the passage of a law or regulation that they oppose is not the end but only the end of the beginning.

Big Pharma alone spent $378 million on lobbying in 2022, according to Open Secrets.

The question is what might happen in Canada to thwart the savings, as much as $150 million a year, that Florida hopes to gain by purchasing cheaper drugs in Canada for Medicaid, its prison hospitals and programs run by the Department of Children and Families. (Individual consumers are already able to order prescriptions from Canada.)

Canada, whose entire population of 38.9 million is only 71% larger than Florida's, is concerned that sizeable purchases by Florida might lead to shortages and higher prices there.

That implies an advantage to the manufacturers, which could block exports to the U.S. by simply producing less than Canada needs.

U.S. drug prices are indeed the world's highest and Canada's are cheaper, owing to price controls asserted by its Patented Medicine Prices Review Board. Even so, however, they are the third highest among 25 comparable nations, 18% more than the average.

Canada too has a powerful pharmaceutical lobby. The important difference is still that Canada has comprehensive price controls, however effective they may be, and the U.S. does not. Our consumers will continue to be stiffed until we have them too.

Biden's Inflation Reduction Act was a significant step forward by repealing the rule that Medicare could not negotiate prices with manufacturers. In a process now underway, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services has chosen the first 10 well-known, well-advertised drugs, including Eliquis and Jardiance, for mandatory negotiations. Agreed-upon prices would then be enforced, beginning Jan. 1, 2026, for all purchasers using Medicare Part D plans. Those are already limited to charging no more than $35 for a month's supply of insulin.

The general population needs more. Price controls should be as direct as those applying to the cost of electricity, another product that is essential to life.

©2024 South Florida Sun Sentinel

HISTORICAL WIN FOR TRUMP IN IOWA GOP PRIMARY!
I won by a landslide! Quit hanging on!!
Hey, Nikki... Let loose! This is now a two man race!
No way! I'm the only candidate that can defeat Trump for President!! You will see that in the New Hampshire primary next week!!
DeSANTIS
HALEY
©2024 JANOELE KING FOSTMESSAGEWORKS

Critical issues that should be discussed at the NMI Covenant Section 902 consultation talks (2024)

By JOSE S. DELA CRUZ
SPECIAL TO THE SAIPAN TRIBUNE

One of the most pressing matters that should be discussed at the next U.S.-CNMI Covenant Section 902 consultation talks is the need to resuscitate the non-performing economy of the CNMI, particularly over the past five years. The only industry the CNMI now has, and which is still viable, is the visitor industry. But this industry has been on "life support" for about five years now, and especially so since the inception of the COVID-19 public health pandemic that began in late 2019.

With the start of the New Year 2024, the visitor industry has started to make a very slow recovery but, to date, this industry is still performing poorly—at a very low 30%or so capacity. And the primary country where visitors to the CNMI have started coming from has been mainly South Korea.

A brief background about the CNMI economy

In the '80s and '90s, the primary country servicing the CNMI visitor industry was Japan. But since the start of the 21st century 24 years ago, visitors from Japan to the CNMI has decreased dramatically. Today, there are very few visitors from Japan who come to visit the CNMI. Indeed, Japan became a distant third in terms of the number of visitors coming to the CNMI. And this is very sad, because it was Japanese investors and visitors who started the CNMI visitor industry and spurred its growth, soon after we became a U.S. commonwealth in 1978. Today, hardly any Japanese investor comes to the CNMI to invest in our visitor industry. They have literally stopped investing in the CNMI for at least two decades now. And this has clearly hurt the fledgling economy of the CNMI.

During the mid-1980s, Chinese garment manufacturers began relocating some of their garment-manufacturing production to the CNMI because the CNMI was not subject to the U.S. textile quota restrictions imposed on foreign countries. For this reason and because the CNMI (and not the U.S.) was then in control of all immigration matters in the CNMI, plus the fact that the federal minimum wage law did not, at that time, apply to the CNMI, the CNMI became an "ideal location" for garment manufacturers from China and Korea.

But as soon as the textile quota restriction was lifted by the World Trade Organization at the end of 2004, literally all the garment manufacturers immediately left the CNMI in 2005. They relocated back to their country of origin—China or South Korea, where the wages are much cheaper and costs of manufacturing are much less. Indeed, even the locally-owned garment manufacturer—TanHoldings Corp.—relocated to China because the cost of labor there is much cheaper than the CNMI. And with their departure, the garment industry in the CNMI became history.

For the next decade—from 2005 until about 2015—the CNMI economy was limping on one foot, with its only remaining industry—the visitor industry. During this 10-year period, the annual tax revenue collected by the CNMI government dropped dramatically by at least 40%. And correspondingly, the public service being provided by the CNMI government suffered greatly because of the huge decrease in local government revenue during this 10-year period.

Desperate for ways to try and turn around the local economy, CNMI government leaders decided to "try their luck" with a new industry—the casino industry. The idea of establishing a casino industry on Saipan was hatched in 2014 by some of the CNMI government's elected leaders. Several of them had been to Hong Kong and Macao and saw the flourishing casino industry in Macao, a Chinese territory. Aside from Chinese casino operators, Macao also had several casino operators from Las Vegas, the mecca for casino gambling in the United States.

The idea to start a casino industry on Saipan, the capital of the CNMI, was floated around for several months and a few companies were apparently interested in the idea, but on one condition: that the casino operator would be given an exclusive license to operate all casinos on Saipan. That condition was agreed to by CNMI leaders, i.e., the idea of granting an exclusive casino license on Saipan to only one licensee. And with that, the plan to establish an exclusively licensed casino industry on Saipan was implemented by legislation that was passed by the CNMI Legislature and signed into law by the CNMI Executive Branch.

The company awarded the exclusive Saipan casino license

See CRITICAL on Page 11

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

CRITICAL

From page 10

was Imperial Pacific International Holdings Company, Ltd. The company, thereafter, began laying the foundation for the exclusively licensed Saipan casino. IPI started with a "temporary casino" facility at the Duty-Free Shoppers Ltd.'s main store in Garapan, reportedly "to train its casino employees," while at the same time working on the construction of its permanent facility on public land leased from the CNMI Department of Public Lands.

Controversy arose with the use of such public land for a casino, because the land at issue was a site where the ancestral remains of ancient, indigenous islanders were buried. Notwithstanding this sacred, cultural and historical concern, construction on the permanent casino structure began and continued. Meanwhile, the temporary casino facility was operating at the DFS premises quite successfully, with "rolling chip activities" on the DFS premises reportedly amounting to billions of dollars in bets placed. IPI was apparently making millions of dollars from the temporary facility at its DFS location, with many of its so-called "high rollers" coming from China to gamble at IPI's "Best Sunshine" location.

But once the construction at its permanent facility reached the point where the first floor was basically completed and furnished, IPI decided in 2017 to close its temporary facility at the DFS premises and moved its operations to the first floor of its permanent facility, whose structure from the third floor to the 14th floor was still substantially an unfinished, skeletal structure. Indeed, after construction stopped on or soon after 2019, the substantially unfinished structure posed a danger to the safety of the general public. Indeed, on the very top of this high-rise building, there remained, for about five years, two or three high-rise construction cranes that were not taken down by IPI after construction had stopped. It was not until this month—January 2024—that the high-rise construction cranes were taken down at the instruction and order of the CNMI Department of Public Works.

Casino activity at the permanent casino facility of IPI, from 2017 until the end of 2019, was neither as brisk nor as profitable as IPI's temporary casino operations at its DFS location previously. Indeed, for one reason or another, casino activity at the new facility soon began to slow down. And by the end of 2019, casino activity at the permanent location began to trickle to a halt. Soon thereafter construction activity on the upper floors slowed down and eventually stopped, apparently for lack of funding needed to complete the construction of the casino facility.

This unfortunate turn of event was followed by a series of lawsuits filed against IPI for unpaid wages to construction workers, for unpaid invoices to IPI vendors and suppliers, and for other unpaid IPI obligations. Finally, with the arrival of the COVID-19 public health pandemic in late 2019, operations at the permanent casino facility, both casino activity and construction work, soon came to a halt by 2020. And today, in the middle of downtown Garapan, there stands this colossal casino structure that remains uncompleted and continues to pose a danger to the public, especially since the building structure has apparently started to decay, deteriorate, and rust.

With the demise of the Saipan casino industry—the CNMI's third industry—due to the apparent financial inability on the part of the casino owner to finish such a huge project, the CNMI is essentially back to square one in terms of economic activity, with only one industry—again, the visitor industry—having a reasonable chance to resuscitate and revive itself. But in order for the visitor industry to "return to life," as they say, the CNMI must formulate a clear and concrete vision and adopt a realistic plan of action regarding how to go about enticing once again prospective visitors from Japan and Korea, as well as from Australia, the Philippines and even China, to come and visit the CNMI.

Clearly, tourism leaders in the CNMI—private, business and government leaders, together—must sit down and do the hard work of formulating a realistic plan of action to revive the CNMI visitor industry. After that, there must also be a follow-up plan as to the second, third and subsequent steps needed to ensure that the effort at reviving the CNMI visitor industry will become a success, and not wither and die. And once we begin to see some degree of success with our renewed efforts, we should remain vigilant and not sleep at the wheel because this was apparently one of the underlying reasons why the CNMI visitor industry literally died during the past decade or so. Our leaders basically slept at the wheel.

The federal immigration and labor issues affecting the CNMI

The next set of issues that should be addressed by the CNMI government and the United States at the next Covenant Section 902 consultation talks is the matter dealing with the immigration and labor needs of the CNMI. This subject is one of the most critical issues affecting the CNMI. Federal immigration and labor law requirements with respect to the CNMI must be tailored and fine-tuned by the U.S. government, i.e., the U.S. Congress, so that the CNMI could develop and maintain a productive, insular economy. As we all know, under the NMI Covenant the CNMI used to have local control over immigration matters in the CNMI. And such control by the CNMI with respect to immigration matters in the islands enabled the CNMI to bring into the CNMI both skilled and unskilled foreign workers needed by the visitor and its ancillary construction industry, as well as to be able to introduce any new industry in the islands.

The CNMI used to exercise complete authority and control over local immigration and labor matters for about three decades—from 1978 to about 2008. Unfortunately, the CNMI did not provide the necessary degree of control and discipline in terms of the influx of foreign workers into the CNMI, as well as the fact that our leaders did not address the poor treatment of foreign workers by their employers in the CNMI, most of whom were foreign-owned owners of the garment companies. The U.S. Congress warned CNMI leaders so many times in the mid-1990s and thereafter to do something about the uncontrolled influx of foreign workers into the CNMI and their inhumane treatment, particularly by the garment industry employers. But CNMI leaders did not heed the clear warnings given us by members of the U.S. Congress and President Bill Clinton.

As a result, the U.S. Congress subsequently passed in 2007 and 2008 two federal legislations (a) removing CNMI control over immigration matters in the CNMI and (b) making the federal minimum wage law applicable to the CNMI. The CNMI strenuously objected to the introduction of both federal legislations, but the die was already cast and both federal legislations were passed by the Democratically-controlled Congress and were signed into law by Republican President George W. Bush.

The federal immigration "take-over legislation" immediately had a devastating impact on the economy of the CNMI, because now the CNMI cannot do as it pleases with respect to the hiring of needed foreign workers (both skilled and unskilled) that would provide the labor needed by the visitor industry and its ancillary retail businesses. Indeed, these federal "takeover laws" immediately stifled the introduction by the CNMI of any other new industry requiring foreign workers, i.e., industries needed to supplement the CNMI visitor industry. And this fact has stymied the growth of the CNMI economy ever since.

Clearly, most of the fault regarding the influx of foreign workers into the CNMI lies with CNMI's political and business leaders. Such fault on the part of CNMI government and business leaders caused the federal takeover of immigration matters in the CNMI. But, although the fault lies primarily with the political and business leaders of the CNMI, the federal takeover legislation still should have been crafted and tailored by the U.S. Congress in a way that would address the critical manpower needs of the CNMI, as well as the obligation of the U.S. to help spur the CNMI's fragile, insular economy in the Pacific, situated thousands of miles away from the continental United States.

With an indigenous population today of only about 30,000 residents and a foreign work force population that has dwindled down to about 15,000 workers, more or less, at the start 2024, there is simply no way for the CNMI to service the visitor industry, to introduce any other new industry to the islands and to be able to provide the needed skilled and unskilled workers for any CNMI industry. It is simply impossible. While the CNMI needs to have more visitors to the islands in order to improve and promote its visitor industry, it still needs skilled and unskilled foreign workers to provide the labor needs of the visitor industry, as well as any other new industry that to be introduced and which is a "good fit" for the CNMI.

So a complete and thorough review of the existing U.S. immigration and labor laws applicable to the CNMI must be conducted by both the CNMI and the U.S. government at this year's consultation talks. Indeed, it is recommended that the two sides should draft a new set of federal immigration and labor law that is specifically tailored to meet the manpower needs of the CNMI and the ability to bring in more visitors from other countries, aside from Korea and Japan. This should be done by the two governments to the Covenant Section 902 consultations so that, among others, it would reduce the CNMI's ever growing dependence on federal financial assistance. But as we also should realize, absent such federal financial assistance, the overall financial condition of the CNMI government would have gone into bankruptcy during the past five years.

Any federal legislation enacted for the CNMI must be sensitive to and should be tailored to meet the CNMI's unique circumstances and needs

Financial assistance from the federal government after the last two major typhoons that devastated the CNMI and during the COVID-19 pandemic over the past five years saved the CNMI government from falling into bankruptcy. Federal financial assistance has kept the CNMI government financially afloat over the past five years. And for that the CNMI should be grateful.

But the CNMI is a self-governing entity under the U.S. flag, with the right to internal self-government similar to the 50 states. As a self-governing political entity under the U.S. flag, the CNMI has an obligation to develop its own economy, as each of the 50 states does, and should not rely entirely on the U.S. for all its financial needs. The CNMI government has an obligation to develop its own economy to be able to provide essential public service for the people of the CNMI.

To conclude this opinion piece, it is extremely important for the U.S. government—particularly the U.S. Congress and the federal agencies dealing with the affairs of the CNMI—, in enacting any federal legislation or federal regulations specifically affecting the CNMI, that such federal legislation or regulation should and must be tailored to address the unique needs of and the deficiencies present in an insular economy such as that of the CNMI.

Such deficiencies include the CNMI's distant and insular location in the Pacific, its extremely small population and land area; its lack of local capital to finance any meaningful commercial development or industry; its lack of natural resources; and so forth. In this way, the CNMI will have the ability to become a productive and contributing member within the American political family. The CNMI should not be merely a recipient of federal financial assistance, which has essentially been the case over the past five to 10 years. This unfortunate economic situation is not healthy politically, economically, or otherwise. The CNMI should be able to shoulder and be responsible for its basic financial needs and obligations as a self-governing political entity within the American political family. The CNMI should not continue its substantial dependence on federal financial assistance and grants.

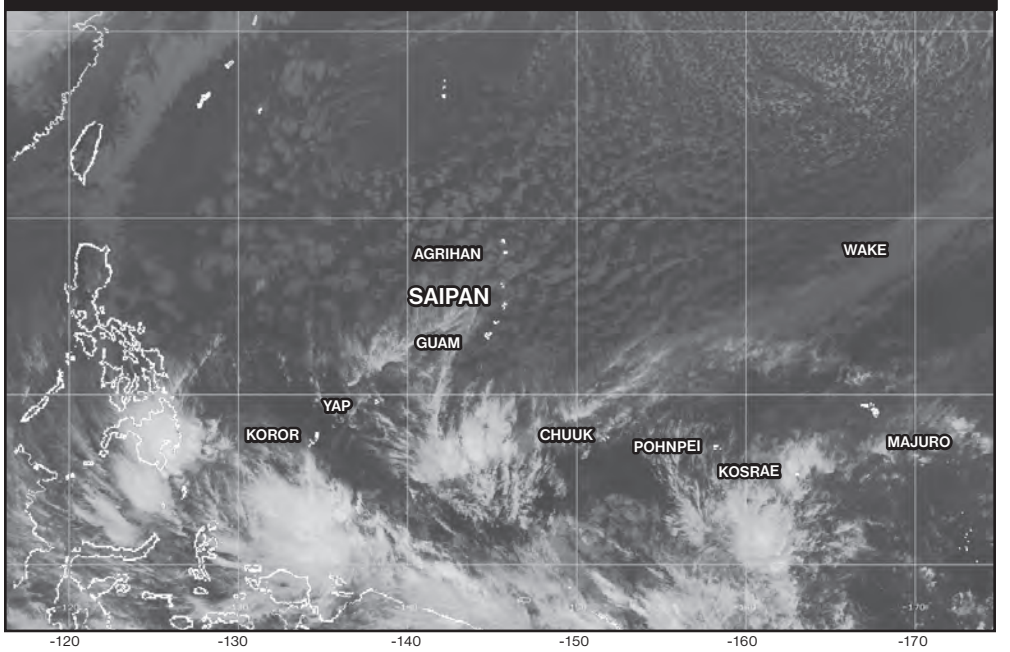
Jose S. Dela Cruz is a former chief justice of the CNMI Supreme Court.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
Breezy. Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. East winds 20 to 25 mph.	Breezy. Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. East winds 20 to 25 mph.	Partly cloudy with a 10 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 10 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 10 percent chance of showers.
84 / 72°	84 / 72°	84 / 72°	84 / 72°	84 / 72°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 7:58 AM THURSDAY, JANUARY 18, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Mostly cloudy skies with isolated showers prevail across the Marianas. Satellite imagery indicates open-cell cumuli are entering Tinian and Saipan waters. Strong to near-gale winds with frequent gale force gusts prevail across the waters. Seas of up to 17 feet are expected, with Tanapag buoy showing seas of 12 to 15 feet.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	84° / 77°
Palau	Thunderstorms	85° / 79°
Yap	Thunderstorms	82° / 77°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	85° / 79°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms	84° / 79°
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	83° / 79°
Majuro	Partly Cloudy	85° / 81°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:46 AM	6:08 PM
Saturday	6:47 AM	6:08 PM
Sunday	6:47 AM	6:09 PM
Monday	6:47 AM	6:09 PM
Tuesday	6:47 AM	6:10 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	12:46 AM	12:36 PM
Saturday	-	1:42 AM	1:21 PM
Sunday	-	2:40 AM	2:08 PM
Monday	-	3:38 AM	3:00 PM
Tuesday	-	4:35 AM	3:54 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Fair	82° / 70°
Beijing	Fair	36° / 21°
Hong Kong	Sunny	79° / 71°
Honolulu	Showers	75° / 70°
London	Light Rain/Wind	53° / 50°
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	68° / 52°
Manila	Mostly Cloudy	87° / 72°
Melbourne	Mostly Sunny	64° / 50°
Miami	Showers	70° / 59°
New York	Clear	25° / 18°
Osaka	Rain	52° / 46°
Paris	Light Rain	48° / 43°
Busan	Rain	57° / 46°
Rome	Partly Cloudy	54° / 41°
Salem	Mostly Sunny	62° / 42°
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	60° / 53°
Seoul	Sunny	41° / 30°
Tokyo	Sunny	54° / 39°
Washington, DC	Clear	30° / 17°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
2:35 AM	High Tide	1.22
7:39 AM	Low Tide	0.75
1:47 PM	High Tide	1.77
9:28 PM	Low Tide	-0.04

NEWS DESK For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

CUSTOMER SERVICE For inquiries, purchase of back issues and complaints, call (670) 235-8747, 235-2440, fax 235-3740.

SUBSCRIPTION Published Monday to Friday, Saipan Tribune offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of $180. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

ADVERTISING For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/703	3:10AM	10:30PM	4, 7 via ICN
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4,7
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
OZ702/625	12:05PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6 via ICN
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

Marianas Deals branches out to Gualo Rai

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

Marianas Deals has opened a second branch in Gualo Rai at the old location of the Commonwealth Cancer Association.

Owners Melvin and Lynie Cabrera said they wanted a bigger store with ample parking to complement their first store in As Perdido and the new site does both that.

The Cabreras said the gift shop and housewares store also has gotten requests from loyal customers who live further north in Tanapag and San Roque to open a location in the middle of the island.

Marianas Deals started as a home-based business during the COVID-19 lockdown, selling comforters and curtains before branching out to a brick-and-mortar presence in As Perdido in February 2022.

The Cabreras said the prime motivator in opening an actual physical store was their home business ultimately outgrew their house. This also led to Lynie Cabrera resigning from her day job to focus fulltime on the burgeoning business.

The December opening of Marianas Deals in Gualo Rai came at a perfect a time, as holiday shoppers came in droves, eager to take advantage of the Cabreras' Christmas promotion.

The couple said Marianas Deals has become a one-stop destination of sorts for affordable perfume, comforters, and curtains from suppliers in the U.S. mainland and China. During this past holiday season, customers also took a fancy to their expansive Sanrio products as well as Christmas gift baskets. The store also carries an assortment of authentic sport caps.

MARK RABAGO

Marianas Deals' second branch is located in the old location of the Commonwealth Cancer Association in Gualo Rai.

MARK RABAGO

The December opening of Marianas Deals in Gualo Rai came at a perfect a time, as holiday shoppers came in droves, eager to take advantage of the Cabreras' Christmas promotion.

As for their market, Marianas Deals' customers seem to be the local and Filipino communities.

They also have a layaway program, where interested customers can put a 20% down payment to reserve the item and full payment should be made in a month's time.

For this coming Valentine's Day, the Cabreras will be stocking up both their newly opened Gualo Rai store and As Perdido location with specialty items for the day of hearts.

MARK RABAGO

Marianas Deals started as a home-based business during the COVID-19 lockdown, selling comforters and curtains.

Marianas Deals in Gualo Rai is open from 10am to 6:30pm, Monday-Friday and 9am-6:30pm on weekends. For more information, call (670) 989-9420. They can also be reached via their Facebook page: Marianas Deals.

US officials say 40 Boeing jets have been inspected

By DAVID KOENIG
AP AIRLINES WRITER

Federal officials have briefed a congressional committee on their investigations into a jetliner that lost a panel of its fuselage in midflight this month and revealed that airlines have inspected 40 identical Boeing planes.

The Federal Aviation Administration said it will review information from those inspections of Boeing 737 Max 9 jets while it develops a maintenance process before letting the planes carry passengers again.

Jennifer Homendy, chair of the National Transportation Safety Board, and FAA Administrator Mike Whitaker spent two hours briefing members of the Senate Commerce Committee in Washington on Wednesday as questions continue to swirl around how the panel of an Alaska Airlines jetliner blew off while traveling 16,000 feet above Oregon. The officials indicated that their separate investigations of Boeing and the accident are in the early stages.

"Nothing was said about penalties or enforcement, but when there is an end result, I have no doubt but that there will be consequences," said Sen. Jerry Moran, a Kansas Republican, in an interview after the closed-door session.

Moran said Whitaker indicated that the FAA is focusing "on the challenges that Boeing has faced over a longer period of time, of which this incident, this potential disaster, was only one component."

During the briefing, "there was also interest in trying to make sure that the FAA is doing its job in its oversight," Moran said.

The FAA and NTSB declined to comment on the briefing.

Separately, Homendy said her agency will look into how exactly the panel was produced by Spirit AeroSystems and installed on the Alaska Airlines plane. She told reporters after the briefing that the panel was manufactured in Malaysia by Boeing's leading supplier.

That development puts more attention on Boeing's global supply chain. Over a period of many years, the company outsourced much if its manufacturing.

A spokesman for Spirit AeroSystems confirmed that the plug was made in Malaysia and said the company is committed to cooperating with the NTSB.

Meanwhile, Boeing's CEO David Calhoun spent the day visiting the Wichita, Kansas, factory of Spirit AeroSystems. He vowed that the two companies will work together to "get better."

Calhoun and Spirit CEO Patrick Shanahan—a former Boeing executive and acting U.S. defense secretary whose nomination by President Donald Trump to lead the Pentagon failed—met with about 200 Spirit employees in what the companies termed a town hall.

"We're going to get better" because engineers and mechanics at Boeing and Spirit "are going to learn from it, and then we're going to apply it to literally everything else we do together," Calhoun said.

Shanahan told the workers that by working with the NTSB, FAA, the airlines and Boeing, "we will restore confidence."

The meeting of CEOs occurred as both companies face scrutiny over the quality of their work.

An Alaska Airlines Max 9 was forced to make an emergency landing on Jan. 5 after a panel called a door plug blew out of the side of the plane shortly after takeoff from Portland, Oregon.

The NTSB is investigating the accident, while the FAA investigates whether Boeing and its suppliers followed quality-control procedures.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Apple to disable blood-oxygen feature on premium watches sold in US as part of patent dispute

Apple says it will disable a blood-oxygen monitoring feature on its two most popular watches in the U.S. beginning Thursday to comply with a court-ordered revival of a sales ban stemming from a patent dispute. The decision to turn off the blood-oxygen sensor for consumers who buy either the Apple Watch Series 9 or Ultra 2 in the U.S. came after a federal appeals court on Wednesday refused to extend an order that had allowed the watches to remain in stores during a battle over the rights to some of the technology. A temporary stay issued by the U.S. Court of Appeals three weeks ago had allowed the two watch models to return to stores in the U.S. after Apple pulled them from shelves and websites just before Christmas as part of a long-running battle with medical technology company Masimo. The U.S. International Trade Commission in late October ruled a blood-oxygen sensor in the Apple Watch models infringed on Masimo's patents, a finding that Apple is trying to overturn in appeals court. But that process could take at least a year to unfold, forcing the Cupertino, California, company to find another way to keep its premium watches available in the U.S.

Uniqlo sues Shein over alleged copy of its popular 'Mary Poppins bag'

TOKYO (AP)—Uniqlo Co. has sued rival retailer Shein over a small shoulder bag the Japanese retailer said was an inferior and unlawful copy of its hit product touted as the "Mary Poppins bag."

The lawsuit demanded Shein stop selling its product that Uniqlo said looks too much like its Round Mini Shoulder Bag. The Uniqlo bag is praised on TikTok and other social media as roomy but also light and compact. The Mary Poppins nickname refers to the 1964 musical starring Julie Andrews in which a nanny pulls just about anything from her magical carpet bag, including a hat stand. Shein, founded in China but now based in Singapore, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The lawsuit was filed in Tokyo District Court on Dec. 28 by Tokyo-based Fast Retailing Co., which operates Uniqlo stores. Uniqlo said Thursday it's demanding damages of about 160 million yen ($1.1 million) in its lawsuit targeting the three companies that operate Shein, Roadget Business Pte, Fashion Choice Pte and Shein Japan Co. Uniqlo said Shein's product was a copyright violation of inferior quality that undermined customer confidence in the Uniqlo brand. Uniqlo's bag comes with inner pockets and is billed as durable and water-resistant. In Japan, it costs 1,500 yen, and in the U.S. $19.90, coming in various colors, including light blue and violet. Uniqlo, which has nearly 2,500 stores in 26 global markets, is behind hit affordable casual clothing like HeatTech thermal underwear.

Nation

Biden discuss Ukraine aid, US border deal with congressional leaders

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Joe Biden hosted top congressional leaders at the White House to underscore Ukraine's security needs as it continues to fight Russia's nearly two-year-old invasion, hoping to add momentum to efforts to pass $110 billion in stalled aid to Ukraine, Israel and other U.S. allies.

Speaker Mike Johnson, in one of his few direct encounters with the president, used the face-to-face moment to push Biden for tougher border security measures, with the speaker telling him that GOP lawmakers were demanding "substantive policy change" and insisting that the White House's executive actions on immigration had weakened the border.

The dueling focus from the two leaders highlighted the precarious nature of the complicated talks to unlock Ukraine aid, which is hinging on negotiations to enact tougher measures at the U.S.-Mexico border to satisfy Republicans who are otherwise hesitant about sending more aid abroad.

AP

House Speaker Mike Johnson of La., second from right, flanked by, from left, Rep. Mike Turner, R-Ohio, Rep. Mike Rogers, R-Ala., and Rep. Mike McCaul, R-Texas., speaks to reporters outside the West Wing of the White House in Washington, Wednesday, Jan. 17, 2024, following their meeting with President Joe Biden.

While Biden, Johnson and other lawmakers who went to the White House agree broadly on continuing to support Kyiv and implementing restrictions at the border, the two sides have remained at odds on details, with the speaker pushing the White House and Senate negotiators on immigration measures that go beyond what Biden is willing to accept.

"We understand that there's concern about the safety, security and sovereignty of Ukraine," Johnson told reporters after the meeting, which ran for more than 80 minutes and included senior congressional leaders and top lawmakers on national security committees. "But the American people have those same concerns about our own domestic sovereignty and our safety and our security."

Later on Capitol Hill, Johnson said he was "cautiously optimistic" as he brushed past reporters.

Inside the Cabinet Room meeting, as the fireplace roared and tea and coffee were served, Biden again made clear to lawmakers what he had said in public for weeks: That the border is broken and that significant changes are needed, according to attendees.

"He even said, 'I will do a big deal on the border,'" said Rep. Jim Himes, D-Conn., recounting Biden's words from the meeting.

Part of the thinking behind the meeting was to populate it with national security leaders, to impress upon Johnson the importance of the aid package and the current U.S. approach to world affairs. So during Wednesday's meeting, members of Biden's national security team sought to underscore the real impact that fading U.S. support is having on the battlefield for Ukraine.

White House officials detailed for lawmakers that Ukrainian forces are running low on key weapons, including arms that the Ukrainians have no choice but to use because of the current nature of the fight, according to two U.S. officials who were not authorized to comment publicly and requested anonymity to discuss the private talks.

One of the officials said Biden's team broke down for lawmakers on a month-by-month basis the impact a lack of a congressional deal will have on Ukraine's ability to defend territory and derail its efforts to win back land that Russia has captured. White House officials also stressed to lawmakers that the lack of U.S. commitment to provide further funding to Kyiv has emboldened Russian leader Vladimir Putin to carry out some of the biggest bombardments on Ukrainian soil since the war began in February 2022.

Following the meeting, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., warned that if Congress didn't greenlight more aid, "within a year, we would be on our back foot, doing all kinds of things that we wouldn't want to do." Schumer also said Jake Sullivan, Biden's national security adviser, discussed how countries such as Japan and Korea "would probably turn from us if we didn't support Ukraine."

Some US states, NYC succeed in getting 2020 census numbers double-checked and increased

By MIKE SCHNEIDER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

Illinois is adding tens of thousands of people to its population total, and California is getting misplaced sailors on an aircraft carrier put in the right location, after successfully asking for a review of their 2020 census figures.

New York City also appears to have gotten an additional 1,090 people added to its population total recently after asking the Census Bureau to double-check the city's numbers from the head count of every U.S. resident, city officials said.

The once-a-decade census produces population figures that help determine political power and the annual distribution of $2.8 trillion in federal funding. The Census Bureau has two programs giving governments opportunities to have their population totals reviewed and adjusted if need be. Nearly 200 requests for reviews were filed by tribal, local and state governments for the 2020 census.

Changes from the reviews will be applied only to future annual population estimates used for the rest of the decade in determining federal funding. They can't be used to change how many congressional seats each state was allotted during the apportionment process, nor for the data used for redrawing political districts.

Here's a look at how two of the most populous U.S. states, and the nation's largest city, had their reviews resolved recently.

For the nation's most populous state, with 38.9 million residents, it was more about putting things in the right place rather than adding people.

The placement of the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, along with its more than 5,000 crew members, was corrected so that it's in National City, rather than in neighboring San Diego. Although part of the ship is located in San Diego, what matters is where crew members get off and on the ship, and that part of Naval Base San Diego is in National City, state officials said.

The 4,000 prisoners at the Mule Creek State Prison also were reallocated from Amador County to the city of Ione after California requested that change.

The reviews for California were "just an opportunity to suggest to the bureau that some things are in the wrong place," Walter Schwarm, the state's chief demographer, said in an email.

Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker announced this month that the nation's sixth most populous state was getting an additional 47,000 people to its population total after the state asked for a review of its census figures. Illinois officials believed that the 2020 census had overlooked more than 40,500 people living in care homes or senior living facilities and more than 5,800 college students living in dorms, the governor's office said.

These "group quarters" were among the most difficult places to count as campuses closed and prisons and nursing homes were locked down at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Census Bureau created a separate program to handle these challenges.

"This correction will bring in millions in additional federal funding for crucial programs and help to ensure future counts reflect the true number of Illinois residents," Pritzker said in a statement.

Police response during Uvalde school shooting will be scrutinized again in Justice Department report

UVALDE, Texas (AP)—A federal report into the halting and haphazard law enforcement response to a school shooting in Uvalde, Texas, was set to be released Thursday, reviving scrutiny of the hundreds of officers who responded to the 2022 massacre but waited more than an hour to confront and kill the gunman.

Uvalde, a community of more than 15,000, continues to struggle with the trauma left by the killing of 19 elementary students and two teachers, and remains divided on questions of accountability for officers' actions and inaction.

But it's unclear what new light the U.S. Department of Justice review will shed. The shooting has already been picked over in legislative hearings, news reports and a damning report by Texas lawmakers who faulted law enforcement at every level with failing "to prioritize saving innocent lives over their own safety."

In the 20 months since the Justice Department announced its review, footage showing police waiting in a hallway outside the fourth-grade classrooms where the gunman opened fire has become the target of national ridicule.

Attorney General Merrick Garland was in Uvalde on Wednesday ahead of the release of the report, visiting murals of the victims that have been painted around the center of the town. Later that night, Justice Department officials privately briefed family members at a community center in Uvalde before the findings were made public.

Berlinda Arreola, whose granddaughter was killed in the shooting, said following Wednesday night's meeting that accountability remained in the hands of local prosecutors who are separately conducting a criminal investigation into the police response.

"I have a lot of emotions right now. I don't have a lot of words to say," Arreola said.

The review by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services was launched just days after the shooting, and local prosecutors are still evaluating a separate criminal investigation by the Texas Rangers. Several of the officers involved have lost their jobs.

The Justice Department has said its investigation would "provide an independent account of law enforcement actions and response that day" and identify lessons learned and best practices to help first responders prepare for active shooter events.

Asia

N. Korea's rejection of the South is both a shock, and inevitable

SEOUL, South Korea (AP)—Even for a nation that has perfected the provocative, North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's declaration that he would abandon the existential goal of reconciling with rival South Korea was a shock. But a closer look shows it's the almost inevitable culmination of years of building tension.

World powers will now be closely watching to see how one of Kim's biggest foreign policy declarations since he took power in 2011 plays out as he works to gain leverage in a region that holds both promise and danger for his small, impoverished, nuclear-armed nation.

The bombshell came at this week's rubber-stamp parliament, where Kim called for rewriting North Korea's constitution to eliminate the idea of a peaceful unification between the war-divided countries and to cement the South as an "invariable principal enemy."

AP

Russian President Vladimir Putin, right, and North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un shake hands during their meeting at the Vostochny cosmodrome outside the city of Tsiolkovsky, about 200 kilometers (125 miles) from the city of Blagoveshchensk in the far eastern Amur region, Russia, on Sept. 13, 2023.

It's the clearest sign yet of how far inter-Korean relations have fallen since February 2019, when Kim's nuclear diplomacy with former U.S. President Donald Trump imploded in Hanoi, Vietnam. The animosity that followed that highly public setback has been accompanied by an accelerated, and unprecedented, expansion of Kim's nuclear arsenal and by repeated threats of nuclear war against Washington and Seoul.

Kim, who during Monday's Supreme People's Assembly meeting described South Korea as "top-class stooges" of America, may be attempting to diminish South Korea's regional power while moving toward direct U.S.-North Korean nuclear talks.

Kim's new approach to the South comes as he tries to break out of diplomatic isolation and strengthen his footing regionally. He is playing off deepening U.S. tensions with Moscow and Beijing over Russia's war in Ukraine and China's assertive foreign policy.

North Korea's recent efforts to boost ties with Russia and China and join a united front against Washington in what Kim calls a "new Cold War" were highlighted by his September visit to Russia for a summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

North Korea has been recalibrating its regional approach since the collapse of the 2019 Hanoi summit, said Ankit Panda, an expert with the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.

"But now, with advanced nuclear and missile capabilities and the support of Russia and China, Kim feels confident enough to make these changes, which amount to his most consequential proclamations on external affairs since taking power in North Korea," Panda said.

North Korea no longer sees Seoul as a useful middleman to extract concessions from Washington. Instead, its rival is now seen as an obstacle to the North's efforts to carve out a more assertive presence in global affairs, said Hong Min, an analyst at South Korea's Institute for National Unification.

Pyongyang has viciously criticized conservative President Yoon Suk Yeol, who since taking office in 2022 has expanded military cooperation with Washington and Tokyo while seeking stronger U.S. assurances that it would swiftly and decisively use its nuclear capabilities to defend its ally in the event of a North Korean nuclear attack.

In eliminating the idea of a shared sense of statehood between the Koreas, Kim could be reinforcing North Korea's older approach of ignoring South Korea and attempting direct dealings with Washington. The old reasoning in Pyongyang, according to Hong, was that the South wasn't a direct party to the armistice that ended the bloodshed of the 1950-53 Korean War. That ceasefire was signed between the U.S.-led U.N. Command, North Korea and China, which sent troops to fight for the North.

ASIAN BRIEFS

Evacuation underway for stranded tourists after multiple avalanches trap 1,000 people in China

BEIJING (AP)—Rescuers evacuated tourists on Tuesday from a remote skiing area in northwestern China where dozens of avalanches triggered by heavy snow have trapped more than 1,000 people for a week, state media said. The avalanches have blocked roads, stranding both tourists and residents in a village in Altay prefecture in the Xinjiang region, close to China's border with Mongolia, Russia and Kazakhstan. Those injured were being airlifted out on a military helicopter while supplies such as food and fuel were being flown in. State broadcaster CCTV said a snow-blocked road linking Hemu village to major roads was cleared on Tuesday, enabling vehicles to enter and tourists to drive themselves out. Footage showed dozens of tourists dragging luggage over snow-covered areas toward a military helicopter, while a long line of outgoing cars was seen on the cleared road.

Fukushima nuclear plant operator in Japan says it has no new safety concerns after Jan. 1 quake

TOKYO (AP)—The operator of the wrecked Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Japan said Tuesday it has no new safety worries and envisions no changes to the plant's decommissioning plans even after a deadly earthquake on Jan. 1 caused minor damage to another idled nuclear plant, rekindling concerns and prompting a regulatory body to order a close examination. The magnitude 7.6 quake on New Year's Day and dozens of strong aftershocks in Japan's north-central region have left 222 people dead and 22 unaccounted for. The main quake also caused a small tsunami. Two reactors at the Shika nuclear power plant on the western coast of the quake-struck Noto peninsula survived. But its operator, Hokuriku Electric Power Co., later reported temporary power outages due to damage to transformers, the spilling of radioactive water from spent fuel cooling pools and cracks on the ground, but no radiation leaked outside. "At the moment, we believe there won't be any change to our (Fukushima Daiichi decommissioning) plan because of the Noto quake," said Akira Ono, the head of the Tokyo Electric Power Company Holdings' decommissioning unit for Fukushima Daiichi. He said TEPCO's assessment confirmed the integrity of all Fukushima Daiichi reactor buildings even in the potential case of a quake 1.5 times as powerful as the one that struck in March 2011.

Almost 100,000 Afghan children are in dire need of support, 3 months after earthquakes, UNICEF says

ISLAMABAD (AP)—Almost 100,000 children in Afghanistan are in dire need of support, three months after earthquakes devastated the country's west, the U.N. children's agency said Monday. A 6.3-magnitude earthquake shook Herat province on Oct. 7 and a second strong quake struck the same province days later, on Oct. 11, killing more than 1,000 people. The majority of those dead in the quakes in Zinda Jan and Injil districts were women and children, and 21,000 homes were destroyed, UNICEF said in a statement. "The atmosphere in these villages is thick with suffering even 100 days after the earthquakes in western Afghanistan when families lost absolutely everything," said Fran Equiza, UNICEF representative in Afghanistan. "Children are still trying to cope with the loss and trauma. Schools and health centers, which children depend upon, are damaged beyond repair, or destroyed completely," he added. "As if this was not enough, winter has taken hold and temperatures hover below freezing," Equiza said. "Children and families without homes live in life-threatening conditions at night, with no way to heat their temporary shelters."

Pakistan recalls ambassador to Iran over airstrikes by Tehran that killed 2 people

ISLAMABAD (AP)—Pakistan recalled its ambassador to Tehran on Wednesday, a day after Iran conducted airstrikes inside Pakistan that it claimed targeted bases for a militant Sunni separatist group.

Islamabad denounced the attack as a "blatant violation" of its airspace and said it killed two children.

Tuesday's airstrikes in Pakistan's restive southwestern Baluchistan province imperiled diplomatic relations between the two neighbors, but both sides appeared wary of provoking the other. Iran and nuclear-armed Pakistan have long regarded each other with suspicion over militant attacks.

The attack raised the threat of violence spreading in a Middle East unsettled by Israel's war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Iran also staged airstrikes late Monday in Iraq and Syria over an Islamic State-claimed suicide bombing that killed over 90 people earlier this month. Iraq recalled its ambassador from Iran for consultations.

Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, the spokesperson for Pakistan's Foreign Ministry, announced that Islamabad was recalling its ambassador to Iran over the strikes.

"Last night's unprovoked and blatant breach of Pakistan's sovereignty by Iran is a violation of international law and the purposes and principles of the charter of the United Nations," she said in a televised address.

Baloch added that Pakistan asked the Iranian ambassador, who was visiting Tehran, not to return.

Iran did not immediately acknowledge Pakistan's decision.

Iranian state media reports, which were later withdrawn without explanation, said the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard targeted bases in Pakistan belonging to the militant group Jaish al-Adl, or the "Army of Justice."

Iran's defense minister also said Wednesday that Iran would respond to any threats against itself, the official IRNA news agency reported.

Without naming any country, Gen. Mohammad Reza Ashtiani said: "We will show reaction to threat against the Islamic Republic of Iran from any region. The reaction will be corresponding, harsh and strong."

Jaish al-Adl, which seeks an independent Baluchistan for ethnic Baluch areas in Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, acknowledged the assault in a statement shared online.

Six bomb-carrying drones and rockets struck homes that the militants claim housed children and wives of their fighters. Jaish al-Adl said the attack killed two children and wounded two women and a teenage girl.

World

NEARLY TWO YEARS AFTER INVASION

West still seeking a way to steer frozen Russian assets to Ukraine

WASHINGTON (AP)—It's been nearly two years since the United States and its allies froze hundreds of billions of dollars in Russian foreign holdings in retaliation for Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. That roughly $300 billion in Russian Central Bank money has been sitting untapped as the war grinds on, while officials from multiple countries have debated the legality of sending the money to Ukraine.

The idea of using Russia's frozen assets is gaining new traction lately as continued allied funding for Ukraine becomes more uncertain and the U.S. Congress is in a stalemate over providing more support. But there are tradeoffs since the weaponization of global finance could harm the U.S. dollar's standing as the world's dominant currency.

At this week's World Economic Forum meetings in Davos, Switzerland, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called for a "strong" decision this year for the frozen assets in Western banks to "be directed towards defense against the Russian war and for reconstruction" of Ukraine.

"Putin loves money above all," he said. "The more billions he and his oligarchs, friends and accomplices lose, the more likely he will regret starting this war."

AP

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy gestures after his speech at the Annual Meeting of World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Tuesday, Jan. 16, 2024.

Biden administration officials who previously dismissed the idea as legally cumbersome are showing growing openness to the idea.

Penny Pritzker, the U.S. special representative for Ukraine's economic recovery, said at the Davos forum that the U.S. and Group of Seven allies are still looking for an adequate legal framework to pursue the plan.

"Get all the lawyers and all the various governments and all the parties really to come together to sort that through," she said. "It's hard, it's complicated, it's difficult, and we need to work."

Administration officials caution that even if a legal way can be found to transfer the frozen dollars to Ukraine, the war-torn nation has immediate needs for funds that must be met by other means since U.S. assistance to Ukraine's military has ground to a halt.

Bipartisan legislation circulating in Washington called the Rebuilding Economic Prosperity and Opportunity for Ukrainians Act would use assets confiscated from the Russian Central Bank and other sovereign assets for Ukraine.

A senior official who spoke on condition of anonymity to relay internal discussions said the administration was generally supportive of legislation to give the U.S. more flexibility in making sure Russia pays for the damage it has caused and is in "active conversations" with allies on how best to do that.

But even if legislation were enacted, Nicholas Mulder, a sanctions expert at Cornell University, cautioned that seizing frozen assets could have the unintended effect of undermining efforts to ensure longer-term funding for Ukraine.

"Right now it is being advanced by Washington as a substitute rather than a complement to long-term Western support for Ukraine," he said. "If the assets are transferred, these funds too will run out sooner or later. But by that time Western leaders will have ceased to make any political case for supporting Ukraine, and getting support back up will be much harder."

The U.S. announced at the start of Russia's invasion that America and its allies had blocked access to more than $600 billion that Russia held outside its borders—including roughly $300 billion in funds belonging to Russia's Central Bank. Since then, the U.S and its allies have continued to impose rounds of targeted sanctions against companies and the wealthy elite with ties to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

A cholera outbreak in Zambia has caused more than 400 deaths and infected 10,000

LUSAKA, Zambia (AP)—Zambia is reeling from a major cholera outbreak that has killed more than 400 people and infected more than 10,000, leading authorities to order schools across the country to remain shut after the end-of-year holidays.

A large soccer stadium in the capital city has been converted into a treatment facility.

The Zambian government is embarking on a mass vaccination program and says it's providing clean water—2.4 million liters a day—to communities that are affected across the southern African nation.

The national disaster management agency has been mobilized.

Cholera is an acute diarrhea infection caused by a bacteria that is typically spread via contaminated food or water. The disease is strongly linked to poverty and inadequate access to clean water.

The outbreak in Zambia began in October and 412 people have died and 10,413 cases have been recorded, according to the latest count on Wednesday from the Zambia Public Health Institute, the government body that deals with health emergencies.

The Health Ministry says cholera has been detected in nearly half of the country's districts and nine out of 10 provinces, and the nation of about 20 million people has been recording more than 400 cases a day.

"This outbreak continues to pose a threat to the health security of the nation," Health Minister Sylvia Masebo said, outlining it was a nationwide problem.

The United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF, called the fatality rate of around 4% in the three-month outbreak "a devastatingly high number." When treated, cholera typically has a death rate of less than 1%.

There have been recent cholera outbreaks in other southern African nations including Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe. More than 200,000 cases and over 3,000 deaths have been reported in southern Africa since the start of 2023, UNICEF said.

Malawi had its worst cholera outbreak in decades in 2023. Last year, the World Health Organization reported that about 30 countries globally, also including Nigeria and Uganda in Africa, suffered serious outbreaks in the last few years.

Cholera barely affects countries in the developed world and can be easily treated but can be quickly fatal if not treated.

More than half—229—of the victims in the Zambian outbreak died before being admitted to a health facility, the public health institute said.

Zambia has had several major cholera outbreaks since the 1970s but this one is the worst for 20 years in terms of the caseload, according to Dr. Mazyanga Mazaba, the director of public health policy and communication at the public health institute.

The cholera bacteria can also survive longer in warmer weather and unusually heavy rains and storms in southern Africa have contributed to recent outbreaks, experts say.

US pledges new sanctions over Houthi attacks will minimize harm to Yemen's hungry millions

WASHINGTON (AP)—The United States on Wednesday put Yemen's Houthis rebels back on its list of specially designated global terrorists, piling financial sanctions on top of American military strikes in the Biden administration's latest attempt to stop the militants' attacks on global shipping. But a new Houthi attack on an American-owned ship was reported.

Biden administration officials said they would design the financial penalties on the Houthis to minimize harm to Yemen's 32 million people, who are among the world's poorest and hungriest after years of war between the Iran-backed Houthis and a Saudi-led coalition.

But aid officials expressed concern. The decision would only add "another level of uncertainty and threat for Yemenis still caught in one of the world's largest humanitarian crises," Oxfam America associate director Scott Paul said.

The sanctions that come with the formal designation are meant to sever violent extremist groups from their sources of financing.

President Donald Trump's administration designated the Houthis as global terrorists and a foreign terrorist organization in one of his last acts in office. President Joe Biden reversed course early on, at the time citing the humanitarian threat that the sanctions posed to ordinary Yemenis.

Military strikes by the U.S. and Britain against Houthi targets in Yemen have failed to stop weeks of drone, rocket and missile strikes by Houthi forces on commercial shipping transiting the Red Sea route, which borders Yemen.

The Houthis are one in a network of Iran- and Hamas-allied militant groups around the Middle East that have escalated attacks on Israel, the U.S. and others since Israel's military offensive in Gaza, in response to Hamas' Oct. 7 attacks in Israel.

The Houthis were originally a clan-based rebel movement. They seized Yemen's capital in 2014 and withstood a subsequent yearslong invasion led by Saudi Arabia aimed at driving the Houthis from power. Two-thirds of Yemen's people live in territory now controlled by the Houthis.

Even as administration officials previewed the new sanctions, Houthis launched the second attack this week against an American-owned ship, striking with a bomb-carrying drone. The vessel and crew were safe after extinguishing a fire from the attack, the captain reported.

Houthi spokesperson Mohammed Abdul-Salam, meanwhile, said in a post on X, formerly Twitter, that the militant group considered its new terrorist designation by the U.S. to be "a badge of honor for Yemen for its support of Palestinian resistance in Gaza."

Off the Wall

Feds banning humorous e-messages on highways

PHOENIX (AP)—It's no joke. Humorous and quirky messages on electronic signs will soon disappear from highways and freeways across the country.

The U.S. Federal Highway Administration has given states two years to implement all the changes outlined in its new 1,100-page manual released last month, including rules that spells out how signs and other traffic control devices are regulated.

Administration officials said overhead electronic signs with obscure meanings, references to pop culture or those intended to be funny will be banned in 2026 because they can be misunderstood or distracting to drivers.

The agency, which is part of the U.S. Department of Transportation, said signs should be "simple, direct, brief, legible and clear" and only be used for important information such as warning drivers of crashes ahead, adverse weather conditions and traffic delays. Seatbelt reminders and warnings about the dangers of speeding or driving impaired are also allowed.

Among those that will be disappearing are messages such as "Use Yah Blinkah" in Massachusetts; "Visiting in-laws? Slow down, get there late," from Ohio; "Don't drive Star Spangled Hammered," from Pennsylvania; "Hocus pocus, drive with focus" from New Jersey; and "Hands on the wheel, not your meal" from Arizona.

Arizona has more than 300 electronic signs above its highways. For the last seven years, the state Department of Transportation has held a contest to find the funniest and most creative messages.

Anyone could submit ideas, drawing more than 3,700 entries last year. The winners were "Seatbelts always pass a vibe check" and "I'm just a sign asking drivers to use turn signals."

"The humor part of it, we kind of like," said state Rep. David Cook, a Republican from Globe, told Phoenix TV station CBS 5. "I think in Arizona the majority of us do, if not all of us."

Kentucky city beams message inviting ET

LEXINGTON, Ky. (AP)—A Kentucky city has come up with an out-of-this-world campaign to promote tourism.

The Lexington Convention and Visitors Bureau used an infrared laser to beam a message into space to invite extraterrestrial travelers.

"The first thing you'll notice as you descend through Earth's atmosphere above Central Kentucky is the lush green countryside that surrounds Lexington's vibrant city center. That's our famous bluegrass," the message begins. It goes on to describe gentle rolling hills, horse farms and bourbon before suggesting places to stay and eat and shop.

The idea for the campaign came from recent UFO revelations and advances in deep space imaging that have fueled the belief that we are not alone in the universe, the visitors bureau said in a statement this month announcing the move.

The agency said it worked with scientists and scholars to beam the message toward potentially habitable planets in the TRAPPIST-1 solar system 40 light years away.

The effort was led by Lexington native Robert Lodder, who is an expert in computer engineering, astrobiology, and Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence.

AT THE WORLD DARTS CHAMPIONSHIP

Raucous British fans put on a show

LONDON (AP)—Luke Littler, a 16-year-old on debut at the World Darts Championship, came within one match of winning the sport's biggest prize and a jackpot of 500,000 pounds ($630,000).

But that wasn't even close to being the strangest sight at what is probably the most colorful event in the British sporting calendar.

For three weeks from December through January, it is party time at the Alexandra Palace—or "Ally Pally"—in London, when grown men dress like babies and revelers turn up in ever more outrageous costumes.

In Wednesday's epic final, which was won by world No. 1 Luke Humphries, fans came dressed as everything from the characters from Alice in Wonderland to pop and rock stars like Elton John, David Bowie and Michael Jackson.

A woman could be seen limbo dancing between a group of men dressed as traffic cones and the sight of someone wearing a foam dartboard on their head was never too far away.

It all adds to an occasion that feels distinctly British as fans joined together to celebrate one of the country's most beloved sports.

As well as the thrilling action on the stage, it is the atmosphere generated by the raucous crowds that has created such a cult phenomenon. Around 90,000 fans are estimated to attend over the course of the event.

Likely helped by the huge pitchers of beer that slosh around the room, the crowds chant about their love of the sport as much as any individual competitor.

Exploding toilet at store left customer filthy, injured

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)—A customer has filed a negligence lawsuit against Dunkin', claiming he was injured by an exploding toilet at one of the coffee chain's locations in central Florida.

Paul Kerouac is seeking more than $100,000 in a lawsuit filed Wednesday in state court in Orlando, claiming he suffered "severe and long term injuries" following the explosion of a toilet in the men's room of a Dunkin' location in Winter Park, Florida, a year ago.

After the explosion left Kerouac covered in human feces, urine and debris, he walked out of the men's room seeking help from workers and the store's manager, according to the lawsuit. An employee told him that they were aware of the "problem with the toilet" since there had been previous incidents, the lawsuit says, without diving into further details about the explosion.

When contacted Thursday by email for more details on Kerouac's injuries, his attorney, Scott Spradley, said he was tied up and couldn't answer the questions until the following day. The Canton, Massachusetts-based company did not immediately respond to an email seeking comment.

Science &Technology

AFTER FAILED MOONSHOT

Lunar lander will burn up on reentry to Earth

CAPE CANAVERAL, Fla. (AP)—A U.S. company's lunar lander will soon burn up in Earth's atmosphere after a failed moonshot.

Astrobotic Technology said its lander is now headed back toward Earth from the vicinity of the moon. Company officials expect the mission to end Thursday. Astrobotic is working with NASA to track the lander's path and said it should pose no safety risk during its fiery reentry.

The lander, named Peregrine, rocketed from Cape Canaveral last Monday. It quickly developed a fuel leak that forced Astrobotic to abandon its attempt to make the first U.S. lunar landing in more than 50 years. The company suspects a stuck valve caused a tank to rupture.

Astrobotic said it has consulted with NASA and other government officials on how best to end the mission. The company said it does not want to endanger satellites around Earth or create a hazard for future spacecraft flying to the moon.

It was a "difficult decision," the company said in an online update late Sunday. "By responsibly ending Peregrine's mission, we are doing our part to preserve the future" of space exploration.

NASA paid more than $100 million to fly experiments on the Peregrine lander. It's part of the space agency's bid to commercialize lunar deliveries by private businesses while the government works to get astronauts back to the moon.

Largest great ape to ever live went extinct because of climate change

WASHINGTON (AP)—An ancient species of great ape was likely driven to extinction hundreds of thousands of years ago when climate change put their favorite fruits out of reach during dry seasons, scientists reported Wednesday.

The species Gigantopithecus blacki, which once lived in southern China, represents the largest great ape known to scientists—standing 10 feet tall (3 meters) and weighing up to 650 pounds (295 kilograms).

But its size may also have been a weakness.

"It's just a massive animal –just really, really big," said Renaud Joannes-Boyau, a researcher at Australia's Southern Cross University and co-author of the study published in the journal Nature. "When food starts to be scarce, it's so big it can't climb trees to explore new food sources."

Science Matters
Unstable scooters' trail of injury
Wider use of electric scooters brought a surge in U.S. scooter-related injuries, which can have severe consequences, according to new research.
Compared to bike injuries
Scooter injuries carried 40% greater risk of arm, leg fracture and 100% greater risk of paralysis
56% of scooter patients required major operations; 48% of bike patients did
27% of scooter injury patients were younger than 18 years; 16% of bike injuries were
Comparable hospital stays and medical costs
92,815 people under 65 were hospitalized 2016-20 for bicycle and scooter injuries (6,125 scooter cases)
Growing financial burden of scooter injuries
$6.6 million in 2016
$35.5 million in 2020
Scooter user hazards
High handlebars cause more chest, lung and cardiac injuries in falls and accidents
Small wheels are unstable on uneven pavement; worse steering and braking
Use with no helmet
Sharing scooter
Source: Nam Yong Cho and Peyman Benharash of UCLA; Journal of American College of Surgeons; National Association of City Transplantation Officials; TNS Photos
Graphic: Helen Lee McComas, Tribune News Service
© 2024 TNS

Life & Style

Scholar discovers stories, poems possibly written by Louisa May Alcott

WORCESTER, Mass. (AP)—The author of "Little Women" may have been even more productive and sensational than previously thought.

Max Chapnick, a postdoctoral teaching associate at Northeastern University, believes he found about 20 stories and poems written by Louisa May Alcott under her own name as well as pseudonyms for local newspapers in Massachusetts in the late 1850s and early 1860s.

One of the pseudonyms is believed to be E. H. Gould, including a story about her house in Concord, Massachusetts, and a ghost story along the lines of the Charles Dickens classic "A Christmas Carol." He also found four poems written by Flora Fairfield, a known pseudonym of Alcott's. One of the stories written under her own name was about a young painter.

"It's saying she's really like ... she's hustling, right? She's publishing a lot," Chapnick said on a visit to the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, a national research library of pre-20th century American history and culture that has some of the stories Chapnick discovered in its collection as well as a first edition of "Little Women."

Alcott remains best known for "Little Women," published in two installments in 1868-69. Her classic coming-of-age novel about the four March sisters — Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy — has been adapted several times into feature films, most recently by Greta Gerwig in 2019.

Chapnick discovered Alcott's other stories as part of his research into spiritualism and mesmerism. As he scrolled through digitized newspapers from the American Antiquarian Society, he found a story titled "The Phantom." After seeing the name Gould at the end of the story, he initially dismissed it as Alcott's story.

But then he read the story again.

Chapnick found the name Alcott in the story — a possible clue — and saw that it was written about the time she would have been publishing similar stories. The story was also in the Olive Branch, a newspaper that had previously published her work.

As Chapnick searched through newspapers at the society and the Boston Public Library, he found more written by Gould — though he admits definitive proof they were written by Alcott's has proven elusive.

SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

Steely Dan, R.E.M., Timbaland, Hillary Lindsey and Dean Pitchford get into Songwriters Hall of Fame

NEW YORK (AP)—Steely Dan, R.E.M., Timbaland, Hillary Lindsey and Dean Pitchford will be inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame, an incoming class of musicians who have scaled the heights of country, classic rock, pop, hip-hop and alt-rock. Steely Dan — co-founded by Donald Fagan and the late Walter Becker — finally get into the hall despite being a staple of classic rock with songs like "Reelin' in the Years," "Do It Again" and "Hey Nineteen." They went into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2001. R.E.M.—the inducted members are Bill Berry, Peter Buck, Mike Mills and Michael Stipe—are behind such alt-rock hits as "Losing My Religion," "Everybody Hurts" and "It's the End of the World as We Know It (And I Feel Fine)." And Nashville hitmaker Lindsey helped write "Girl Crush" for Little Big Town and "Jesus, Take the Wheel" for Carrie Underwood.

Ariana Grande's new album will arrive March 8

Thank you, next: Ariana Grande announced on Wednesday that her new album, titled "eternal sunshine," will be released on March 8. Last Friday, Grande released her first single from "eternal sunshine," a house-informed pop kiss-off to the haters, "yes, and?" News of the album first broke Dec. 27, when the two-time Grammy award winner teased the future full-length album on her Instagram page. It will be her seventh studio album and first since 2020's "Positions." ***(AP)***

King Charles III will have prostate operation next week, as Kate recovers from abdominal surgery

LONDON (AP)—King Charles III and the Princess of Wales are both dealing with medical issues that will force them to delay previously planned public engagements over the coming weeks.

Charles will undergo a "corrective procedure" for an enlarged prostate next week, Buckingham Palace said on Wednesday. The palace said the king's condition is benign.

Moments earlier, the princess' office announced that Kate would remain at a private hospital in London for up to two weeks after undergoing planned abdominal surgery. The princess, formerly Kate Middleton, is the wife of Prince William, the heir to the throne.

King Charles III

Kate

While it is somewhat unusual for members of the royal family to release details about their health, the twin announcements may help to avoid speculation if events featuring Charles or Kate have to be postponed or canceled over the coming weeks.

The publicity around the king's surgery is seen as an opportunity to encourage other men to have their prostates checked in line with public health advice. The 75-year-old monarch sought treatment "in common with thousands of men each year," the palace said.

An enlarged prostate is common in men over age 50. The condition affects how one urinates and isn't usually a serious health threat. It's not cancer and doesn't lead to an increased risk of developing prostate cancer.

The U.K. and foreign media have been focused on the health of Britain's senior royals in recent years, first as the late Queen Elizabeth II faded from public view during the last months of her 70-year reign, then when Charles ascended the throne at an age when most of his contemporaries were long retired.

Two Malaysian filmmakers charged with offending religious feelings

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia (AP)—The director and producer of a banned Malaysian film that explores the afterlife were charged Wednesday with offending the religious feelings of others in a rare criminal prosecution of filmmakers, slammed by critics as an attack on freedom of expression.

Mohamad Khairianwar Jailani, the director and co-scriptwriter of "Mentega Terbang," and producer Tan Meng Kheng pleaded not guilty to having a "deliberate intention of wounding the religious feelings of others" through the independent, low-budget film. If found guilty, they could face up to a year in jail, a fine or both.

Defense lawyer N. Surendran said the two believe the charge is "unreasonable and unconstitutional" because it violates their right to freedom of expression. "As far as we are concerned, these are groundless charges and we will challenge those charges in court," he said.

The film, which debuted at a regional film festival in 2021, revolves around a young Muslim girl who explores other religions to figure out where her ailing mother would go when she dies. Scenes that angered Muslims included ones showing the girl desiring to eat pork, which is forbidden in Islam, and pretending to drink holy water, and her father supporting her wish to leave Islam. It also sparked death threats against Khairianwar.

The film was briefly shown on a Hong Kong streaming platform last year before it was removed. The Home Ministry banned the film last September without giving any reason. The two filmmakers filed a suit challenging the government's decision before they were charged.

Absent father wonders about the fate of mother and child

DEAR ABBY: Almost 50 years ago, I got a girl pregnant. She left the state and two years later sent me a letter and a picture of the cutest baby—mine. Her letter ripped me apart. I admit I was a terrible person and deserved everything she wrote.

Now that I'm up in years, I would like to know about her and the child. I have thought about the baby often throughout the years. I don't want back into her life, but I would certainly like to see her. I have been thinking about hiring a private investigator to find her whereabouts. Your thoughts on this?

DEFERRED DAD IN NEW MEXICO

DEAR DAD: After the private investigator lets you know where your old girlfriend is (providing she's still on this side of the sod), refrain from showing up in person. Clearly, the "girl" has gone on with her life, and the "baby" is well into middle age. Write your old flame a letter, or have your lawyer do it, explaining you have thought about her and the child, and ask if either of them is willing to meet with you. Then cross your fingers.

■■■

DEAR ABBY: I have been obese most of my life. Recently, I had a health issue that resulted in my losing a significant amount of weight. Thankfully, I'm doing much better now.

While I'm happy to be enjoying life as a thinner person, how do I handle the well-meaning questions from people who want to know how I did it? My family and a few close friends know what I went through, but I'm not comfortable sharing the details with co-workers, clients, neighbors, etc., regarding how I got my new figure. How do I satisfy the curiosity of the questioners without seeming rude or divulging too many details?

KEEPING IT TO MYSELF

DEAR KEEPING: You do not have to answer every question that is asked of you. Bear in mind that these folks are acknowledging your achievement, so try this: "Thank you for the compliment, but I prefer not to discuss it." (Then smile and try not to look like you're gloating.)

■■■

DEAR ABBY: I live in a different state than my parents with my husband and two children. When we FaceTime with them (mainly my mom) or they come to visit, Mom only talks about my niece and nephew. I love my niece and nephew, but it feels like they are all I hear about.

It makes it seem like Mom doesn't care or pay attention to my children because she and Dad are thinking only about my niece or nephew. They often compare my children to their cousins as well. If I mention something one of my kids did, Mom instantly says my niece or nephew did the same thing.

Other people have commented that they have noticed her doing this, so I know I'm not being overly sensitive. What can I say to her without upsetting the rest of the family?

MY KIDS COUNT, TOO

DEAR MY KIDS: If your mother is oblivious to what she has been doing, make clear to her that her favoritism is blatant. Tell her what she is doing is insensitive, that other people have noticed and pointed it out to you and you want it stopped before your children are old enough to catch on. Period.

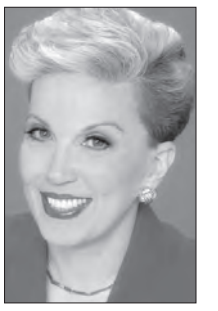
■■■

To order "How to Write Letters for All Occasions," send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby—Letter Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

BY ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

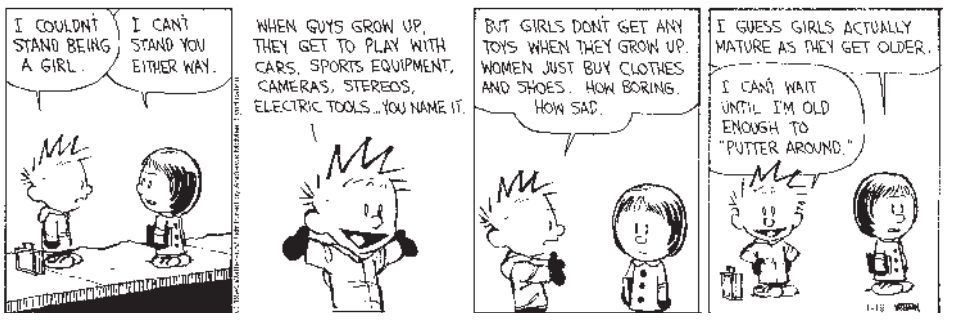


Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


I COULDN'T STAND BEING A GIRL.
I CAN'T STAND YOU EITHER WAY.
WHEN GUYS GROW UP, THEY GET TO PLAY WITH CARS, SPORTS EQUIPMENT, CAMERAS, STEREOS, ELECTRIC TOOLS... YOU NAME IT.
BUT GIRLS DON'T GET ANY TOYS WHEN THEY GROW UP. WOMEN JUST BUY CLOTHES AND SHOES. HOW BORING. HOW SAD.
I GUESS GIRLS ACTUALLY MATURE AS THEY GET OLDER.
I CAN'T WAIT UNTIL I'M OLD ENOUGH TO "PUTTER AROUND."

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

SHOULD I HIT ON SIXTEEN?
NO IDEA. THIS IS A DREAM, REMEMBER?
HELLO, GENTLEMEN!
CAN I BRING YOU ALL ANYTHING?
I COULD REALLY GO FOR A PACIFIER.
I WOULDN'T SAY NO TO A NYLABONE.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Doze (off)
4 Crooned
8 "The Da Vinci —"
12 Actress Mendes
13 Taxi alternative
14 Graph line
15 Built to last
17 Missing
18 Goodies
19 Formerly called
21 Golf peg
22 Photo collections
26 Spud
29 Adobe file format
30 Estuary
31 Pt. of U.S.A.
32 "Evita" role
33 LAPD ranks
34 Badge metal
35 Chairman of China
36 Encounters
37 Confuses
39 God, to Galileo
40 Mandela's org.
41 New
45 Equitable
48 Award
50 Future atty.'s exam
51 Beloved
52 Victory
53 Bassoon's kin
54 Tolkien creatures
55 Messy room

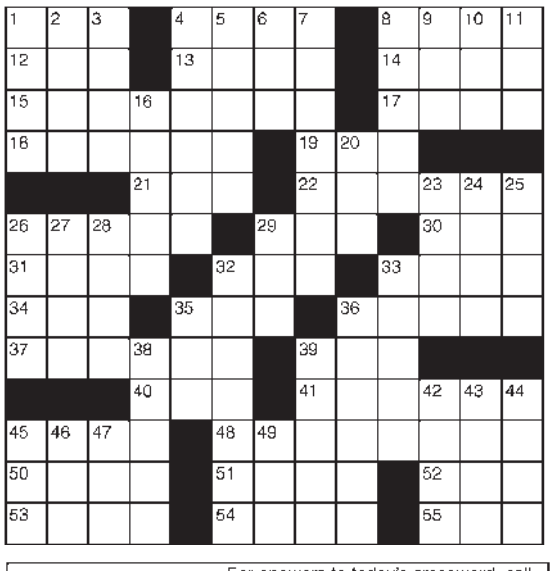
DOWN

1 Salamander
2 Done with
3 Valley
4 Historic South Carolina fort
5 Humiliate
6 Nancy Drew's boyfriend
7 Hurled weapon
8 Novelist Carr
9 Kitchen gadget brand
10 Insult, slangily
11 Ballpark fig.
16 In a while
20 Seasonal helper
23 Incite
24 Baseball glove
25 Back talk
26 "Toodle-oo!"
27 During
28 Look after
29 Saigon soup
32 Waterfall
33 Capital of South Korea
35 Chess pieces
36 Juveniles
38 Coffee bar offering
39 Old gold coin
42 Tools with teeth
43 Revise
44 Contradict
45 "Let's Get Loud" singer, to fans
46 PC port
47 — Paulo, Brazil
49 100 yrs.

Solution time: 25 mins.

A	H	E	M	■	E	R	I	C	■	M	O	B
S	O	N	E	■	A	O	N	E	■	A	P	E
H	E	A	D	D	R	E	S	S	■	S	E	T
E	S	S	A	Y	S	■	■	A	E	I	N	A
■	■	■	I	F	■	F	I	R	T	H	■	■
N	A	H	S	■	B	U	B	■	S	E	L	L
A	G	F	■	■	O	D	F	■	■	A	A	A
B	O	A	T	■	S	G	T	■	U	D	O	N
■	■	D	A	N	S	E	■	D	R	■	■	■
H	O	W	S	O	■	■	R	E	C	O	R	D
A	V	I	■	M	E	T	A	L	H	E	A	D
H	E	N	■	A	D	O	S	■	I	N	G	A
A	N	D	■	D	U	P	E	■	N	O	S	Y

Yesterday's answer 1-19



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Shawn Johnson, 32; Drea de Matteo, 52; Katey Sagal, 70; Dolly Parton, 78.

Happy Birthday: A positive change is heading in your direction. Trust your instincts and make moves that will position you to achieve what's meaningful to you. You can secure your home and personal situation if you follow your plans. Don't let anyone get in your way; take the plunge and do things your way. Don't stop until you are happy with the results you achieve. It's your life. Your numbers are 6, 11, 22, 29, 31, 35, 59.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19)*: Keep an open mind, but don't let anyone talk you into something that isn't feasible. Trust in what's tangible, not what someone suggests. Protecting your name and reputation will help deter someone from stealing your identity or taking advantage of you. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20)*: Set high standards. You can beat the odds and score big if you put everything you've got into what you want to achieve. The sky is the limit, and every move you make will get you one step closer to victory. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20)*: Take nothing for granted and share only what's necessary. Someone will use your words against you when you least expect them. Be a good listener, and you'll gain insight into something that can help you reverse a situation that doesn't make you happy. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22)*: Give a shout-out to someone you appreciate and respect. What you get in return will change how you move forward. It's time to stretch your awareness and contemplate using your skills, knowledge and experience to gain recognition and respect. ✪✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22)*: Spend time honing your skills or making plans with someone you love. Keep a budget in mind, and don't commit to anything that might put you in debt or tempt you to indulge. Take care of your responsibilities before moving on to fun and games. ✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: Take the lead and do what makes sense. Your practical nature will lead to more significant opportunities that allow you to explore something of interest. Networking functions will give you a broad spectrum of what's possible. ✪✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)*: Don't give up when you need to give your all. Research, find out what's going on and deal with anything standing between you and your objective. Anger isn't the answer, but intelligence can help you navigate confusing situations. ✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*: If you don't like something, initiate a change. Take control to avoid letting someone else decide for you. Research your options, put your plan in place and don't stop until you are satisfied with the results. 3 stars

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*: Keep close tabs on your money. Don't invite outside interference into your life. Someone will be happy to cause problems for you if you give them the chance. Concentrate on relationships and looking and feeling your best. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

COPYRIGHT 2007 UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: Follow your instincts. Make domestic changes that add to your comfort and decrease stress. Stay on top of matters that deal with institutions. Leave nothing to chance or in someone else's hands. Speak the truth, act succinctly and put the past behind you. ✪✪✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: Think before committing time, skills or money. Understand implications and be aware of hidden costs. You can help, but don't take on more than you can handle. Concentrate on what's near and dear to you first before spending elsewhere. ✪✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20)*: Put your best foot forward and make your dream a reality. You have plenty to gain if you follow your plans and apply your skills. Don't let anyone deter you from reaching your goal using underhandedness to lower your chance of success. ✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are aggressive, quick-witted and industrious. You are playful and courageous.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave*

Green

	6						4	
		7			6	3	8	5
	8	9			5	2		
			9	8				4
2								
						8	5	2
9		3	5				2	
		6		2			3	
					4			6

Difficulty: ★★★★ 1/19

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

9	6	5	4	3	1	2	7	8
3	1	2	9	7	8	4	5	6
7	8	4	6	5	2	3	1	9
2	4	3	1	8	6	5	9	7
8	5	9	3	2	7	6	4	1
6	7	1	5	4	9	8	3	2
5	2	8	7	1	4	9	6	3
1	3	6	8	9	5	7	2	4
4	9	7	2	6	3	1	8	5

©2024 King Features Syndicate, Inc.

Difficulty: ★★★ 1/18

WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

ROSALYNN CARTER (1927-2023) **Solution: 13 letters**

S	U	C	I	R	E	M	A	D	V	I	S	O	R	R
E	N	O	S	R	E	F	F	E	J	J	A	M	E	S
S	I	E	R	L	I	L	L	I	A	N	E	T	P	S
U	T	E	U	E	W	O	M	E	N	M	N	I	L	T
A	E	R	O	N	A	E	L	E	O	E	H	R	A	P
C	D	G	T	N	I	E	E	R	C	S	E	U	I	L
O	S	E	L	O	R	V	Y	R	W	T	T	H	N	I
M	T	D	Ⓚ	D	Y	M	E	O	I	H	C	P	S	N
M	A	M	Ⓒ	M	M	T	L	R	O	A	G	O	D	F
I	T	N	Ⓐ	I	R	L	W	R	S	O	L	L	R	L
T	E	I	Ⓙ	A	E	S	T	H	G	I	R	I	A	U
M	S	O	C	F	C	A	B	I	N	E	T	C	W	E
E	H	E	A	F	I	R	S	T	L	A	D	Y	A	N
N	H	T	I	M	S	R	E	V	I	G	E	R	A	C
T	S	I	V	I	T	C	A	D	V	O	C	A	T	E

©2024 Andrews McMeel Syndication www.wonderword.com 1/19

Activist, Advisor, Advocate, Americus, Amy, Author, Awards, Cabinet, Caregivers, Causes, Chip, Commitment, Degree, Donnel, Eleanor, Emory, Fellowships, First Lady, Influence, Jack, James, Jefferson, Jimmy, John, Lillian, Plains, Policy, Rights, Role, Smith, The Carter Center, Tours, United States, University, Women, Writer

Yesterday's Answer: Flexible

The NEW **TELEWORD VINTAGE COLLECTION EDITION #1** can be purchased on line at www.WonderWordBooks.com. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

Murray hits jumper at buzzer to lift Hawks to 106-104 win over Magic

ATLANTA (AP)—Dejounte Murray hit a 17-foot jumper as time expired to give the Atlanta Hawks a 106-104 victory over the Orlando Magic on Wednesday night.

Murray finished with 26 points, and Trae Young scored 18 points on 5-for-14 shooting for Atlanta. Onyeka Okongwu had 15 points, and Bogdan Bogdanovic and Clint Capela each added 12. The Hawks shot 51.3% but had a season-high 23 turnovers

Paolo Banchero scored 26 points to lead the Magic. Wendell Carter Jr. had 18 and Jalen Suggs added 16.

After Banchero made a 3-pointer from a couple of feet beyond the arc to tie it at 104 with 8.4 seconds left, Murray dribbled down the left wing with Markelle Fultz, pulled up and swished the jumper for the win.

AP

Atlanta Hawks guard Dejounte Murray (5) hits a game-winning basket at the buzzer during the second half of an NBA basketball game against the Orlando Magic Wednesday, Jan. 17, 2024, in Atlanta.

LAKERS 127, MAVERICKS 110

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Anthony Davis finished an assist shy of a triple-double, D'Angelo Russell scored 29 points and Los Angeles overcame Luka Doncic's triple-double to beat Dallas.

Davis had 28 points on 12-of-17 shooting and added 12 rebounds and nine assists in 33 minutes. LeBron James added 25 points, eight rebounds and eight assists to help the Lakers win for the fourth time in six games.

Los Angeles, which evened its record at 21-21, shot 53.8% from the field (49 for 91) and had 12 3-pointers. It also had a 32-7 advantage in fast-break points.

Returning after missing three games because of a sprained right ankle, Doncic had 33 points, 13 rebounds and 10 assists in 33 minutes for his seventh triple-double of the season and 63rd overall. Dereck Lively II added 16 points and 11 rebounds for the Mavericks, who dropped to 5-4 in January.

TRAIL BLAZERS 105, NETS 103

PORTLAND, Ore. (AP)—Anfernee Simons hit the winning layup with 0.2 seconds left and Portland snapped a four-game losing streak.

Simons finished with 20 points. Jerami Grant led the Blazers with 30 points and eight rebounds.

Mikal Bridges scored 21 for the Nets but had to leave the game for a time in the second half after a collision. Spencer Dinwiddie added 19 points for Brooklyn, which lost its fourth straight.

Portland trailed by 11 but pulled in front 88-87 midway through fourth quarter on Grant's 3-pointer. It was close the rest of the way. Dinwiddie made two foul shots with 1:48 left that gave the Nets a 101-97 lead. But then Simons hit a floater that tied it at 101 before Grant's tip-in with 9.1 seconds to go gave Portland a 103-101 edge.

Cam Johnson's layup tied the game again, and the Blazers called a timeout with 5.2 seconds left before Simons' game-winning basket.

KNICKS 109, ROCKETS 94

NEW YORK (AP)—Julius Randle scored 31 points, Jalen Brunson added 30 in his return from a two-game absence and New York beat Houston.

Brunson missed two games because of bruised left calf and Randle struggled without his point guard in a loss to Orlando on Monday, shooting 5 for 18 for 15 points. But the offense was flowing nicely again in the second half as the Knicks pulled away after leading by two at halftime.

OG Anunoby had 15 points for the Knicks, who reached the halfway point of their schedule at 24-17. Josh Hart finished with 10 points and 13 rebounds.

Fred VanVleet had 24 points and 12 assists for the Rockets, who finished 1-5 on a six-game trip. Alperen Sengun added 18 points and 10 rebounds in Houston's eighth straight loss to New York.

TIMBERWOLVES 124, PISTONS 117

DETROIT (AP)—Anthony Edwards had 27 points and eight assists to lead Minnesota.

The Pistons, who beat the Wizards on Monday, are 2-35 after winning two of their first three games, including a 28-game losing streak that matched the NBA record.

Karl-Anthony Towns scored 27 points for Minnesota, which has won three straight. Jaden McDaniels had 23 points and Rudy Gobert added 19 points and 16 assists.

Jaden Ivey scored 32 points for the Pistons, who were starting a six-game homestand without Cade Cunningham (knee). Bojan Bogdanovic had 20 points and Jalen Duren added 16 points and 11 rebounds.

CELTICS 117, SPURS 98

BOSTON (AP)—Jayson Tatum scored 24 points and Jaylen Brown returned from a one-game absence to score 21 as Boston beat San Antonio in Spurs phenom Victor Wembanyama's first game on the Celtics' famous parquet floor.

The 7-foot-3 French rookie, the No. 1 overall pick in the draft, scored 10 points in the first quarter, when San Antonio kept it close. He finished with 27 points and five rebounds in 27 minutes as the Spurs (7-33), who have the worst record in the Western Conference, lost their third straight.

Jrue Holiday scored 22 points and Luke Kornet matched his season high with nine rebounds for the Celtics, won their third game in a row and improved to 20-0 at home, extending their franchise record.

RAPTORS 121, HEAT 97

TORONTO (AP)—Gary Trent Jr. scored a season-high 28 points, RJ Barrett had 26 and Toronto never trailed in a win over Miami.

Toronto led by 37 at one point despite playing without forward Pascal Siakam. The two-time All-NBA selection and two-time All-Star is being traded to the Indiana Pacers, according to a person with knowledge of the agreement.

Scottie Barnes scored 20 points and Immanuel Quickley had 17 points, nine assists and eight rebounds for the Raptors.

Jimmy Butler scored 16 points for Miami, whose 35-point halftime deficit was the biggest in team history. Tyler Herro and Bam Adebayo also had 16 points each while Duncan Robinson added 14.

PELICANS 132, HORNETS 112

NEW ORLEANS (AP)—Brandon Ingram highlighted a 28-point performance with a career-best seven 3-pointers to go with 10 rebounds and 10 assists, and New Orleans set a franchise record for 3s with 25.

It was the third career triple-double for Ingram, who received a standing ovation as he checked out of the game for good in the final minutes.

CJ McCollum scored 22 points and hit four times from deep. Rookie guard Jordan Hawkins made six 3s and finished with 21 points for New Orleans, while Trey Murphy III hit five 3s and scored 18.

LaMelo Ball had 29 points and Terry Rozier added 25 for Charlotte, which trailed most of the game and by 24 in the second half. Nick Richards added 10 points and 12 rebounds for the struggling Hornets, who have lost six straight and 17 of 18.

CAVALIERS 135, BUCKS 95

CLEVELAND (AP)—Donovan Mitchell had 31 points and Cleveland took advantage of Milwaukee being without superstar Giannis Antetokounmpo to extend their winning streak to a season-best six games.

Antetokounmpo sat with a bruised right shoulder, an injury that kept him out of the lineup for the first time in 29 games—the second longest streak of his career. The two-time MVP is not expected to be out for an extended period.

Georges Niang made 13 of 14 shots and added a career-high 33 points—20 in the first half—for the Cavs, who improved to 11-3 since they lost Darius Garland (broken jaw) and Evan Mobley (knee surgery) with injuries last month. Jarrett Allen added 21 points and 13 rebounds—his 10th straight double-double.

Damian Lillard led Milwaukee with 17 points on 7-of-20 shooting. Khris Middleton had two points, going 1 of 10 from the field.

Siakam traded to the Pacers, while Raptors collect three 1st-rounders

By TIM REYNOLDS
AP BASKETBALL WRITER

Pascal Siakam was traded to the Indiana Pacers on Wednesday night, ending a run of nearly eight years with the Toronto Raptors during which he was a two-time All-NBA selection, two-time All-Star and part of the team that won the 2019 NBA title.

His next chapter: teaming up with All-Star guard Tyrese Haliburton on a Pacers team that started the day as the highest-scoring club in the NBA and now has even more offensive firepower for the second half of the season.

It took Indiana a sizable amount of draft capital—three first-round picks—to get the deal done, but the Pacers also managed to hang on to their four leading scorers this season and add another star to the mix.

"We're incredibly excited to welcome Pascal to Indiana," Pacers President Kevin Pritchard said. "As a two-time All-NBA selection and two-time NBA All Star, Pascal is a player that our organization has long admired and respected. We feel that his unique offensive skillset will complement our style of play, while his defensive versatility will be a valuable asset to our team."

Siakam leaves Toronto fifth on the team's career list in games and points, plus third in rebounds and 10th in steals.

"Pascal is a champion, an integral part of winning teams and an example of what can be achieved with dedication, perseverance, hard work and tenacity," Raptors President Masai Ujiri said. "We're lucky to have seen Pascal develop into the man and player that he is today -- and we are grateful for everything he has done for our city and for our franchise."

Indiana sent a pair of players with NBA championship rings, guard Bruce Brown and forward Jordan Nwora, to Toronto. Guard Kira Lewis, who was acquired earlier Wednesday by Indiana from New Orleans in a deal that helped make the Siakam trade possible, also went to the Raptors.

"Pascal is just a pure basketball junkie," Toronto coach Darko Rajaković said Wednesday night before his team topped the Miami Heat. "He is the first one to show up in the gym, the last one to leave. He was always coachable, always professional since Day 1. ... I can only be thankful and grateful for all of his contributions to our team this season."

New Orleans also gave up a second-round pick and got a sizable prize back for its involvement: The Pelicans are now below the luxury tax threshold.

"We wish him the best," Pelicans coach Willie Green said about Lewis. "Unfortunately, it didn't work out the way we wanted it to here."

The deal is a huge move for Indiana, the NBA's highest-scoring team this season. The Pacers entered Wednesday at No. 6 in the Eastern Conference and soon will get to pair Siakam alongside Haliburton, who has been out with a hamstring issue but could return as early as Thursday. He's listed as questionable for Indiana's game at Sacramento.

Siakam, 29, is in the final year of his contract, which pays him nearly $38 million this season, and becomes eligible this summer to sign a five-year deal that could be worth as much as $247 million. The Pacers are expected to at least consider giving Siakam such a deal.

Siakam was averaging 22.2 points this season, and he has averaged 17.4 points and 6.5 rebounds in his career. He was an All-Star in 2020 and 2023 and was the last starter from Toronto's title team still with the franchise.

Top seed Swiatek escapes with narrow win over 2022 runner-up Collins

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—Top-ranked Iga Swiatek rallied from 4-1 down in the third set to escape with a narrow 6-4, 3-6, 6-4 win over 2022 runner-up Collins on Thursday and advance to the third round of the Australian Open.

In a momentum-swinging match, Swiatek was on top after recovering an early break and leading by a set and a break before the American player rallied to take the second set and race to a 4-1 lead with two service breaks in the third.

Swiatek absorbed the sustained pressure from Collins' powerful groundstrokes until she reversed the momentum on a match-winning five-game roll.

"Oh my God. I don't even know," Swiatek said of how she managed to come back. "Honestly, I was on the airport already. But I wanted to fight to the end.

"I'm really proud of myself, because it wasn't easy."

Swiatek had two match points at 15-40 in the last game but again Collins rallied, saving those and getting a game point with a trademark forehand winner deep to Swiatek's backhand side.

But a forehand long and a backhand wide from Collins gave Swiatek a third match point and she made no mistake this time, finishing in 3 hours and 14 minutes with a deep backhand down the line.

In one of the tournament's toughest opening brackets, both players beat past Australian Open champions in the first round; Swiatek beat 2020 champion Sofia Kenin and Collins overcame 2016 winner Angelique Kerber.

While Swiatek was doing her on-court TV interview. Collins was already en route to a news conference on site at Melbourne Park, in a much faster exit than usual.

"Yeah, I lost 6-4 in the third to one of the best players in the world," Collins said. "And she played some great tennis. (I) left it all on the court."

A heavy rain shower in the opening set forced organizers to close the roof on Rod Laver.

After winning three of the next four games to wrap up the first set, Swiatek was down 5-1 and 40-15 in the second. She saved five set points before Collins clinched it, forcing a deciding third set.

Swiatek, who lost to Collins in the semifinals here two years ago, was again down two service breaks and needed some help.

"She played just perfectly, but it would be hard for anybody to keep that level," she said. "So I wanted to be ready when more mistakes are going to come from the other side. And I just wanted to push her and I did that at the end."

AP

Iga Swiatek of Poland reacts after winning a point against Danielle Collins of the U.S. during their second round match at the Australian Open tennis championships at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia, Thursday, Jan. 18, 2024.

The four-time major winner next faces No. 50-ranked Linda Noskova, who beat U.S. qualifier Kessler McCartney 6-3, 1-6, 6-4 in a match featuring two players on their Australian Open main draw debuts.

Two of opening men's matches went the distance before being decided in 10-point tiebreakers, with Olympic champion Alexander Zverev holding off Lukas Klein 7-5, 3-6, 4-6, 7-6 (5), 7-6 (7) in 4 1/2 hours and No. 11 Casper Ruud edging Max Purcell 6-3, 6-7 (5), 6-3, 3-6, 7-6 (7).

Alex Michelsen defeated No. 32 Jiri Lehecka 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-4.

"He played incredible. He was hitting every single ball as hard as he could from both sides," Zverev said of Klein, a No. 163-ranked qualifier from Slovakia. "I didn't really know what to do most of the times. To be honest, he probably deserved to win the match more than me today.

"That's how tennis goes some times. His ranking is no value to how he's playing right now."

In night matches, 2023 finalist Elena Rybakina and two-time finalist Daniil Medvedev were in action.

Djokovic challenges a heckler in testy 2nd-round win at Australian Open

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—Already sick and tired in another early round slog, Novak Djokovic unloaded on a heckler who crossed the line at the Australian Open.

Defending champion Djokovic angrily challenged the spectator to "say that to my face" and gestured to the man to come down onto the Rod Laver Arena court, the venue for 10 of his record 24 Grand Slam titles.

He then went on a roll, winning three straight games from 2-2 in the fourth set before finishing off Alexei Popyrin 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (4) 6-3.

The 36-year-old Serb then turned to the crowd again and yelled, pumping his fist to celebrate the victory.

Asked later what triggered his rage, Djokovic responded: "I mean, you don't want to know."

"I was tolerating it for most of the match. At one point I had enough," he said. "He didn't have the courage to come down. That's what I was asking him: 'If you have courage, if you're such a tough man, tough guy, come down and tell it to my face.'"

That didn't happen. Djokovic didn't ask for the man to be removed. Stadium security didn't intervene.

Djokovic moved on to the third round, still simmering a little bit about the episode.

"I'm not going to sit and say 'it's all good.' It's not good," he said. "Of course, it upsets me. I'm frustrated. I don't want to be experiencing that, but I have to accept it as it is.

AP

Novak Djokovic of Serbia points to a spectator during his second round match against Alexei Popyrin of Australia at the Australian Open tennis championships at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia, Wednesday, Jan. 17, 2024.

"Sometimes I don't tolerate when somebody crosses the line. That's it."

Djokovic has been dealing with a sore wrist and said after his opening match—a four-hour, four-set win over 18-year-old qualifier Dino Prizmic—that he hasn't been well. He was struggling against Popyrin, who is ranked 43rd.

So, was it the kind of spark that he needed?

"Look, I don't want to be in those types of situations. Yeah, I was flat I guess emotionally. Game-wise I was quite flat," he said. "Maybe that was needed for me to be shaken up a bit and start to find the kind of intensity that I needed to have all match."

Last year's losing finalist, Stefanos Tsitsipas, also had a tough time against an Aussie with the crowd behind him on an adjacent court.

Tsitsipas wasted match points in the 10th game of the fourth set and then had to save four set points to force a tiebreaker, which he clinched for a 4-6, 7-6 (6), 6-2, 7-6 (4) win over Jordan Thompson.

Women's champion Aryna Sabalenka and U.S. Open winner Coco Gauff avoided the early Day 4 upsets in their draw to advance to the third round, along with 16-year-old Mirra Andreeva.

Three-time major finalist Ons Jabeur lost 6-0, 6-2 in 54 minutes to Andreeva on Rod Laver, and then 2018 champion Caroline Wozniacki also lost to a young Russian on the No. 3 show court.

Two other 16-year-old players lost on center court to highly-ranked players: No. 10 Beatriz Haddad Maia accounted for Alina Korneeva 6-1, 6-2 and Sabalenka overpowered Brenda Fruhvirtova 6-3, 6-2.

Gauff, still a teenager herself, extended her winning streak to nine matches at Grand Slams with a 7-6 (2), 6-2 win over fellow American Caroline Dolehide.

She'll next play Alycia Parks, who beat 2021 U.S. Open runner-up Leylah Fernandez 7-5, 6-4.

Sixth-seeded Jabeur went out in 54 minutes against the up-and-coming Andreeva.

"I was really nervous before the match because I'm really inspired by Ons and the way she plays," said Andreeva, who lost in the junior final here last year. "Before I started on the WTA Tour, I always watched her matches and was always so inspired."

Wozniacki, who had two children before returning to the tour late last year after 3 1-2 years away, led by a set and a break before losing 1-6, 6-4, 6-1 to 20-year-old Maria Timofeeva.

Amanda Anisimova, coming back from a seven-month mental health break, beat Nadia Podoroska to move onto a match against Paula Badosa.

No. 8 Maria Sakkari, No. 16 Caroline Garcia and No. 25 Elise Mertens didn't make it past the second round.

On the men's side, No. 4 Jannick Sinner, No. 5 Andrey Rublev and No. 10 Alex de Minaur—Australia's highest-ranked player—advanced in straight sets and progressed along with No. 12 Taylor Fritz, No. 15 Karen Khachanov and U.S. Open semifinalist Ben Shelton, the No. 16 seed, who had a 6-4, 6-1, 3-6, 7-6 (5) over local hope Chris O'Connell.

A quarterfinalist on debut here last year, Shelton said he enjoyed the atmosphere and the support that the home crowd gave O'Connell and said he could still hear "Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, Oi, Oi, Oi" in his sleep.

NMA open tryouts for OAC, Micro Games

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The Northern Marianas Athletics is hosting open tryouts for the sport of athletics with monthly trials to start this March and last until May.

This is your chance to represent the NMI in the Oceania Athletics Championships in Suva, Fiji on June 4-8, and the Micronesian Games on June 15-24, 2024 in the Marshall Islands.

All tryouts in the events of sprints and hurdles, middle- and long- distance run, throws, and jumps will be held at the Oleai Sports Complex.

Age groups are senior open, under 18 for the Oceania Championships, and senior open for the Micronesian Games.

Currently, NMA is conducting national team practices at the Oleai Sports Complex every Tuesday and Thursday from 5pm to 8pm, and Saturday from 6am to 8am. The training is open to all interested individuals aspiring to try out for the games.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CNMI National Athletics Team that competed in the 2023 Pacific Games poses for a photo during the closing ceremony in Honiara, Solomon Islands.

According to NMA, it welcomes athletes of all levels and backgrounds to participate in the trials.

"Whether you're an experienced competitor or new to athletics, this is a fantastic opportunity to be part of the Northern Mariana Islands' athletic contingent," it said.

The NMI has customarily performed well at the Micronesian Games, and NMA hopes to field a team this year that can continue to compete at a high level.

Interested athletes must meet the qualifying standards set forth by NMA and the Micronesian Games eligibility requirements. They must also submit all relevant documents after meeting the qualifying standards.

Qualifying standards for each event will be posted on the NMA Facebook page. Meeting the qualifying standards does not guarantee selection.

For more information, contact NMA Development Officer Elias Rangamar at (670) 287-6347 or email ejrangamar@gmail.com.

About NMA

NMA is the official national governing body of the sport of track and field, cross country, and road racing in the CNMI. NMA sends athletes to the Micronesian Games, World Athletics Championships, Pacific Games, and other international competitions. NMA consists of an all-volunteer board and is a non-profit organization.

2024

From page 23

goals were the Bolley Ballerz, Team Border Control scored the most backcourt points with three kees, and team Quest scored the most xunks on three serves.

There are nine rounds of competition and teams will be eliminated after their third loss. The Top 4 teams will move into the semifinals after the regular season of games is completed. Rocball games are scheduled between 12pm and 12:30pm Tuesday through Friday at the MHS Gym. ***(PR)***

ROCBALL

Team Topshakaz and Team Chagi Fahn pose after a game with James Feger, founder of the sport of Rocball, at Marianas High School's indoor Rocball court.

SGA

From page 23

Sunday, Jan. 21, 2024, at the Laolao Bay Golf & Resort east course. Tee time is 8am and show time is 7:30am.

SGA will announce the 2023 Ace of Aces winners after the January Ace of the Month Tournament.

Jung Eun Teack won the December Ace last Dec. 10 at the Laolao Bay Golf & Resort west course.

He actually finished tied in third place with a net 76 (84, 43-41), but won since first place Larry Deleon Guerrero (net 69) and Nick Sablan (net 74) already won during the season. Attorney General Edward Manibusan also fired a net 76 to tie Jung.

Jung now joins SGA 2023 Ace of the Month winners Ray S. Salas (January), Das Krishnan (February), Joe I. Sablan (March), Rick Kautz (April), Nick C. Sablan (May), Tony S. Reyes (June), Larry I. Deleon Guerrero (July), Edward C. Sablan (August), Ed Manibusan (September), Mariano Fajardo (October), and Tony Reyes (November).

In the closest to the pin competition last December, Joe I. Sablan won hole No. 7, while Alex Tudela and Nick Sablan topped holes Nos. 13 and 17.

In the longest drive, Manibusan brought the lumber in hole No. 3 with Tony Reyes doing the same thing in hole No. 18.

JANG

From page 24

The 30-year-old engineer said running the Rota Marathon is just the first leg of his "running for health" journey.

"I made a conscious decision in December to get back into running because I know it helps me relieve stress, and I feel better about myself and my circumstances afterward. But I want to shout out all the people I see walking/running on Beach Road every day. Seeing you run/walk each day has inspired me to start running again," he said.

In the 5K course, multi-sport athlete Kaithlyn Chavez tore the tape first in 22:24 with Megumie Takaku Shimada second in 27:25, and Aubrey White third 28:54 in the women's division.

In the men's division Elphrain Taimanao Jr. was *numero uno* in 25:07 followed by Peter John White's 25:27 and Jun Shimada's 27:19.

Chavez said she felt very grateful and blessed to win the 5K course of the 2024 Rota Marathon.

"It was definitely a new and great experience because it was my first time going to Rota. The people there are really friendly and welcoming. Even though you don't know them, they would just say hi to you with a smile."

The Saipan International School student said the hardest part of the course was at the beginning, "because I couldn't see where I was stepping since it was still dark. It also made it harder for me because I didn't know the roads and the places."

Conversely, the most pleasant part of the 5K was the support coming from other runners.

"When I passed them, they were cheering me on, which gave me a boost and motivation to push myself harder. Even though it wasn't my best time, I definitely had lots of fun. I'm dedicating this win to Mimi Culp, M.J. Magno, Elizabeth Tom, and Aubrey White because they're always there for me, pushing me and making me a better person," said the 16-year-old.

SIMON

From page 24

us have been constantly training together which developed our skills drastically."

The 16-year-old junior at Saipan Southern High School has been practicing multiple hours—at least five days a week to get into shape. He said he looks forward to international competitions, but said, "I know that it will take a lot hard work to get to where I want to."

For the boys U16 division, Wessel won against Tang, 6-0, 6-2, in the finals to claim the championship.

Wessel faced Pacific Games doubles partner, June Yu, in the semis and blanked him, 6-0, 6-0.

The U14 boys winner was No. 1 seed Ian Chae, as he went undefeated in the four-player round-robin format. Chae first defeated No. 2 Matthew Hwang, 6-2, 7-5 then shut down Jihun Park, 6-2, 6-0; and capped it off with an easy win against Colten Wallace, 6-0, 6-0.

Results of the U14/U16/U12 girls divisions will be posted in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune.*

The U12 boys finals is rescheduled to Saturday, Jan. 20, and the girls U18 finals was rained out and is rescheduled to this Sunday, Jan. 21 at 2pm.

For more information on the 2024 SIS Student Council Tennis Tournament, call (670) 788-7400 or (670) 989-0080.

The Northern Mariana Islands Tennis Association is coordinating the tourney.

DODGERS

From page 24

off quietly enough with just one run scored by the Dodgers' James Benavente, but the punches came rolling in the second and third which forced the game to end early.

The Dodgers hit in six runs in the second with help from multiple fielding errors by the Spartans that the Dodgers capitalized on. In the same inning, Derek Aguon hit an RBI triple that scored Benavente.

The Spartans could only watch as their pitching and defense fell apart, and with the lack of offense, it became the unholy trinity that led to their seventh loss.

The Dodgers just kept adding fuel to the huge fire that is already raging and scored six more runs in the third inning. The Spartans' bats finally connected and they scored two runs in the fourth by way of Ryan Pangelinan and Cris Pangelinan, but at this point, it was too late to play catch up.

The Dodgers scored three more from Aguon, Mel Manahane, and Clint Quitugua, and that was it for the Spartans as they went scoreless to end the game on run-mercy ruling.

In the standings, the only team above the Dodgers is the undefeated Pirates with seven wins.

Last Tuesday's game between the Reds and the Marlins was rescheduled for tonight due to inclement weather.

Lorraine Babauta wins January tourney

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

Lorraine Babauta won the CNMI Women's Golf Association monthly tournament last Jan. 13 at the Kingfisher Golf Links in Talafofo.

The government retiree shot a gross score of 90 following a 40 in the front nine and a 50 in the back nine for a January tournament-best net 78.

"It was the start of the new year. I basically just had the mindset to go out play and enjoy the day," said Babauta.

The San Vicente resident said the weather was ideal for playing golf last Saturday.

"I tip my hat off to the Kingfisher crew. The course was nicely kept and had fun playing. I dedicate the win to CWGA ladies, they make playing fun," she said.

CWGA

Lorraine Babauta, second from left, won the CNMI Women's Golf Association monthly tournament held last Jan. 13 at the Kingfisher Golf Links in Talafofo.

Janet Torres finished second in the January tilt with a net score that actually tied Babauta's 78 (90, 46-44), but lost via scorecard tiebreak. Third place went to Jang Eun Ae with her net score of 79 (95, 45-50).

A total of eight CWGA members played in the January tournament and they are the following with their net score in parenthesis: Yuko Togawa (80), Sae Hee Kim (80), Dol Yamagishi (82), Chang Eun Ae (83), and Flor Jones (90).

The club continues to look for new members as the new season continues. For those interested in becoming a member of CWGA or for more information, contact CWGA president Yuko Togawa at 287-9856, vice president Lorraine Babauta at 287-0621, or treasurer Lou Kim at 783-7317.

CWGA

CNMI Women's Golf Association January tourney winner Lorraine Babauta.

January 3x3 tourney starts today

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The NMIBF Marianas Arsenal 3x3 Basketball Series for January starts today, Jan. 19, with the championship set for Saturday, Jan. 20 at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

The last two 3x3 series in November and December were won by Team Nesian Built, which consists of Coby Santos, Douglas Schmidt, Preston Basa, and Jack Lizama.

Team Nesian Built has a chance of representing NMI in the FIBA Asia 3x3 Cup in Singapore next year.

In the women's division, Alley-Oopsie Daisies consisting of Irish Pagarao, Cassandra Camacho, Kina Rangamar, and Antonette Labausa won the championship last December.

The series is open to any team whether they want to participate in the FIBA 3x3 Asia Cup or not.

For this series, there are 10 men's teams and four women's teams, with Team Nesian Built back to defend their title.

The entrance fee per team is $300. The check must be payable to the Northern Mariana Islands Basketball Federation.

For those who want to join the next series, to be eligible, a player:

Must possess a U.S. passport not expiring within one year from March 2024.

■ Must not have played for the national team in basketball and/or 3x3 for another country in an official FIBA competition of FIBA.

■ Must be at least 18 years old by March 1, 2024, and must turn 19 years old or older by the end of 2024.

■ Must have participated in at least three FIBA 3x3 competitions.

LEIGH GASES

Two-time NMIBF Marianas Arsenal 3x3 Basketball Series champion, Team Nesian Built, pose for a photo after the December tourney at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium today and tomorrow is the January tourney.

League format

■ Maximum of 12 teams for men and eight for women.

■ Single round robin/two pools (Pool A and Pool B).

■ Knockout round: Top 4 teams advance from each pool for men and top two teams from each pool for women.

■ All games will be played under FIBA 3x3 rules and regulations.

All teams will be given points at the end of each month with the following scoring system:

■ 1st place - 50 points
■ 2nd place - 40 points
■ 3rd place - 30 points
■ 4th place - 20 points

All other teams - 10 points

For more information, call (670) 287-3103 or email nmibasketballfederation@gmail.com.

2024 Rocball matches start

Saipan's own copyrighted sport Rocball and trademarked as Rocball began its fifth decade of annual games at Marianas High School last Jan 5.

There are 10 teams in competition to win Marianas High School's signature sport. The teams registered to play for the year 2024 are the Nesian Power, Chagii Fahn, Topshakaz, Border Control, Spicey Locals, Bolley Ballerz, Rizzlers, Quest, Aces, and Baddie Z.

In the first round of competition, there were five games played: Nesian Power defeated Chagii Fahn in two sets, 35-25. Topshakaz failed to "juice-out" in the final set and lost to Baddie-Z in a sudden death overtime set, 7-5.

The Aces defeated Border Control, 56-18; Quest won their game against the Spicey Locals 38-30; and Team Balley Ballerz defeated the Rizzlers, 44-16.

In the first five games of Round 1, there were 77 2- point aces, eight 2-point xunks, seven 2-point backcourt scoring plays completed by a team's goalie, and 15 3-point goals scored. As of yet, none of the players from any team were able to spike down a served ball to score a 1-point jam.

The team that scored the most 2-point aces and 3-point

See 2024 on Page 22

SGA January Ace this Sunday

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

The Saipan Golf Association's 2024 January Ace of the Month Tournament is scheduled for

See SGA on Page 22

Haier
French Door Refrigerator
14.5 cu.ft.
Fingerprint resistant
Quick cool & freeze
Digital thermostat
Freezer drawers
Create Amazing Kitchens
$20.24
Your 1st Rental Payment
Haier
Quad Door Refrigerator
16.8 cu.ft.
Fingerprint resistant
Quick cool & freeze
Digital thermostat
Humidity control
Electric & Gas Ranges
Top Load Washers
Midea
*This is a rent to own transaction. Your first rental payment is $20.24. Regular rental rates apply thereafter. You don't own the product until all rental payments are completed. Example: $9.95 x 12 months= $517.40. See store for details.
NO CREDIT NEEDED
Middle Road 234-RENT | Chalan Kanoa 234-DIAL
DIAL
RENT TO OWN & RETAIL

Murray hits jumper at buzzer to lift Hawks to 106-104 win over Magic.

PAGE 20

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Lorraine Babauta wins January tourney.

PAGE 23

Jang, Soriano etch name into record books

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

Barefoot runner Chang Whan Jang and marathon junky Roxanne Soriano are now part of Rota Marathon lore as the first winners of the event.

The 71-year-old Jang finished first in the two-horse race in the men's division with a time of 5:31:47 with second place Genero Mejia Jr. coming in at 7:08:56.

Soriano, who did the Chicago Marathon and New York Marathon prior to dipping her toes in the Rota Marathon, was the lone woman entry and crossed the finish line in 5:50:44.

Jang said he thoroughly enjoyed his 26.2-mile jaunt across the southernmost island of the CNMI.

"The best part was the volunteers' commitment and cheering us with big smiles. I felt like a king because police escorted me and emergency man followed me all the way more than five hours. Overall, I really appreciate all the things that the Marianas Visitors Authority and the people of Rota did," said the 71-year-old Hopwood Middle School physical education teacher.

The Rota Marathon is the latest of the over 30 marathons Jang has completed since entering his first—the Guam Seiko Marathon—way back in 1982. He's also been a constant participant of the Saipan Marathon since its inception in 2006.

"The asphalt road wasn't hot yet but it was harder to run under the hot sun after 7:30am. I tried to run under shade side of the road. I also ran on the grass more than half of the race because it was so well maintained," he said when asked about the course conditions.

He dedicated his win to his family, the friendly people of Rota, and his fellow Run Saipan members.

Soriano, for her part, admitted that joining the Rota Marathon was a last-minute decision, as she initially only signed up for the half marathon.

Thanks to some egging from her Kanoa FC teammates and from Jang himself, Soriano had a run to remember in the CNMI's "Nature Island."

"The best part was when I saw my Kanoa FC sisters. That boosted me 10,000 times. I also loved Luta's warm hospitality. It's really the best," she said.

Soriano, who works at the Commonwealth Health Center, said she was also able to successfully complete the Rota Marathon thanks to the early 4am start time and the fact that the tree-lined course provided plenty of shade.

Aside from thanking her Kanoa FC teammates and Rota's friendly people, she also gave kudos to Jovi Chavez who ran beside her in the last few miles of the marathon.

"For the first 6 miles I can still hear the half marathon runners from Saipan behind me so it was still okay because we all started at 4am. At around Mile 7 until mile 16, it was all silent and only the stars accompanied me and I could only hear the ocean waves," she added.

In the half marathon, Dominic Kieffer dominated the men's category with a time of 2:04:28, followed by Scott Smith's 2:07:57 and Daniel Depolog's 2:21:10. Topping the women's division in the half marathon was Tammy Ackerman in 2:10:46 with Julia Mast and Sarah Faegre coming in second and third at 2:11:35 and 2:47:07, respectively.

Kieffer said the one drawback on the early start-time is that Rota's natural beauty was shrouded in darkness during the race.

"I ran all of the race in the dark so I didn't get to see a whole lot while I was running, but I did drive it a few times before and after. Rota is so breathtaking. I feel really lucky to be able to visit Rota. The people are always so friendly here too. I'm always waving at everyone, even when I'm running!"

See JANG on Page 22

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Barefoot runner Chang Whan Jang, left, poses with Roxanne Soriano after both topped the men's and women's divisions, respectively, of the 2024 Rota Marathon last Saturday.

Dodgers ring in sixth Masters League win

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The local Dodgers team makes it seem like Shohei Ohtani signed with them instead with the way they're playing in the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League.

They knocked out the Spartans, 16-2, for their sixth win last Wednesday at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.

The winless Spartans can't just get a break and are not unlike the Oakland Athletics of the last Major League Baseball season. The Spartans faced off against the league's No. 2 team and suffered at the bats of their stacked lineup.

The first inning started

See DODGERS on Page 22

LEIGH GASES

In this file photo, Dodgers' Ed Manibusan sets in the batter's box during a game in the 2023 Tan Holdings-SBL Masters League at the Francisco "Tan Ko" Palacios Baseball Field.

Simon, Nason bag U18, U16 titles

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Simon Tang and Nason Wessel reigned supreme in the 2024 SIS Student Council Tennis Tournament that was held from last Friday to Monday at the American Memorial Park tennis courts.

Since there were only four players in the boys U18 division, No. 2 seed Tang claimed the title after going undefeated in the tourney when he won all his matches. He played against No. 1 seed Cody Shimizu, Wessel, and Siwoo Lee.

In Tang's last match, he defeated Lee, 6-1, 6-4. Tang's first match was a tough one against Wessel, and won by the skin of his teeth, 7-6, 3-6, 11-9. In a No. 1 vs. No. 2 showdown against Shimizu, Tang had the upper hand and overpowered him, 6-4, 6-2.

With his undefeated tourney, Tang said, "I feel pretty great!" Joining two divisions, the U16 and U18, Tang said competition in both is "very similar with not a wide range of variety on Saipan. Even with little variety, the tennis players here are still very skilled and competitive tennis players."

He said the hardest matches he played was against Wessel, who competed in the 2023 Pacific Games. Tang said, it's "definitely high-quality matches whenever I play him. I believe that our matches were especially hard because both of

See SIMON on Page 22

LEIGH GASES

Simon Tang serves during the U16 championship in the 2024 SIS Student Council Tennis Tournament against Nason Wessel at the American Memorial Park tennis courts last Monday.

LEIGH GASES

Nason Wessel goes for a return during the U16 championship against Simon Tang in the 2024 SIS Student Council Tennis Tournament last Monday at the American Memorial Park Tennis Courts.